Expendable Assets, a yandere in the secret service
Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/16968393.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence, Major Character Death
Category:	F/F, F/M
Fandom:	僕のヒーローアカデミア | Boku no Hero Academia | My Hero Academia
Relationship:	Midoriya Izuku/Toga Himiko, Todoroki Shouto/Yaoyorozu Momo, Midoriya Inko/Yagi Toshinori | All Might, Original Female Character/Original Female Character, Iida Tenya & Uraraka Ochako, Hadou Nejire/Other(s)
Character:	Toga Himiko, Midoriya Izuku, Hatsume Mei, Todoroki Shouto, Iida Tenya, Uraraka Ochako, Yaoyorozu Momo, Sensei | All For One, Original Female Character(s), Original Male Character(s), Yagi Toshinori | All Might, Midoriya Inko, Bakugou Katsuki, Mineta Minoru, Shigaraki Tomura | Shimura Tenko
Additional Tags:	Spies & Secret Agents, Past Brainwashing, Dreams and Nightmares, BAMF Midoriya Izuku, Brainwashing, Criminal Masterminds, Self-Esteem Issues, Angst and Hurt/Comfort, Fluff and Angst, Blood and Gore, Background Relationships, Some Humor, Sleeper Agents, Villains to Heroes, Major Original Character(s), Original Character Death(s), Aged-Up Character(s), Developing Relationship, Cross-Posted on FanFiction.Net
Language:	English
Series:	Part 2 of Expendable Assets Series
Stats:	Published: 2018-12-12 Completed: 2019-01-11 Words: 114,660 Chapters: 34/34

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by DragonstoneH

Summary

The League is gone, All for One is gone. Carried by fate, Himiko Toga is given a second chance. All she has to do, is kill the right people. With the only hero who will not try to kill her on sight as her ally, Toga must face a powerful enemy, a worldwide conspiracy, and her own past. Will she survive? Will she find redemption?

Adrift, Captured

The alleys of Chicago felt very similar at times to Tokyo; the homeless, the muggers, the trash…*almost home.* A young woman, her dirty blonde hair half hidden under a Cubs beanie, got up from her corner, deliberately stumbling a bit to better look the part she had chosen to play.

The homeless were as invisible as that hero from Japan, and no one gave her a second glance as she walked up to the sidewalk. Soon she was on a well-lit street, later on a bus, and finally, the stop at Chicago´s Navy Pier.

The attraction was filled with tourists, who paid little attention to a short woman stuffing a ratty coat on a trash can. Now a tourist among her kin, the woman approached a man in a bench, asking with her, at least in her own opinion, extremely realistic New York accent “Yo, is there one of 'em pizza stands here? I wanna compare to old Vito's in Brooklyn”.

The man, dressed in a blue business suit, with no apparent Quirk in sight, was clearly exasperated by a stranger interrupting him in what could only be his lunch break.

He ran a hand through his greying hair, adjusted his eyeglasses and looked around to point at a vendor, a few dozen meters away. He pointed at the stand, and started speaking, but all that came out his mouth was a garbled squeal.

The man couldn’t feel his legs, he couldn’t move his arms, he felt a cold burn in his throat. As his thoughts grew vague and terror gripped his mind, he managed to hear a whisper on his ear “All for One does not forget, Don Santini. I am really sorry I had to do this.”

Himiko Toga drew her blade from the “retired” mafioso´s neck and positioned his body discreetly. Hiding the knife again, Toga left the scene, completely incognito. Another whispered name in her nightmares would stop.

A few hours later, on a midnight bus to Los Angeles, Toga took a deep breath, and relaxed. She closed her eyes, plugged her earphones in and let her music soothe her, a playlist the Pro Hero Deku had released on an interview a few months earlier.

It had an adorable amount of All Might themed music and a few energic tunes, and the fact that it was almost completely instrumental had her nodding off soon. The bus would take the better part of the night to get anywhere, so she drifted off to sleep, thinking of green eyes.

Toga walked in the grey ruins of what felt like had once been a school. Her vision was clouded in fog, and her feet dragged along the ground. The corridor opened up to a hall, with stately double staircases going upwards.

A faded insignia adorned the balustrade, a red star with details that she couldn’t quite make out. Toga looked behind her, to the reinforced doors of the building, burst open and sliding off the hinges. Dried grass stretched as far as she could see, where a forest of dry trees began. In the horizon, a tower of some kind could be seen.

She turned back to the stairs and climbed the nearest flight. She couldn’t hear her footsteps. A wooden door opened as she approached, revealing a corridor, with windows to the right, and doors

to the left. Toga looked out the window; beyond the dusty glass, she could see a patio, walled off in moss covered concrete, with overgrown vines covering the lower half, and reaching upwards.

A swing set, a slide and a sandbox stood in the yard, a rust covered playground, dirt gathered by the wind on every item. As her gaze swept the swings, she heard a faint giggle behind her right ear. A child´s giggle, barely an infant.

She spun around, the hair on the back of her neck on standing, to find no one. She kept walking on the hallway, half knowing where she was going.

The third door on the left. It opened for her. A small room, with chair in the middle. A chair with strong leather and steel straps for hands and feet. In front of the chair, a screen covered the entire wall. Toga knew this place. She had forgotten, but then, she had remembered.

The words had been spoken, the memories had returned. She turned away from the chair, trying to run, but every step was agonizingly slow, and the door grew farther away every instant. A hand grabbed her left arm and pulled. She knew that hand, she knew those tattoos, those rings.

The straps closed in, chafing. She couldn't move. A contraption was pulled over her face. She struggled, but strong hands held her head in place.

The contraption was settled over her eyes, and it forced them open.

A syringe was injected directly into her spine, and a cold fluid was injected.

A projector was switched on.

The images flashed by faster than she could process them, photographs of people, places, events. Images of war and death. Speakers blasted commands at both her ears.

Kill. Destroy. Replace. Kill. Maim. Dismember. Become. Kill. She tried clenching her hands, moving her feet, anything to distract her from the images, from the commands, but she could not feel her limbs anymore.

And then the images stopped. The commands stopped. A shadow appeared in front of her, flanked by All for One´s silhouette.

The shadow spoke a series of words and asked her to repeat them. Toga heard herself repeat the words, and then the shadow stepped back. All for One stepped closer and Toga saw the list of targets on her mind's eye.

Only three remained. A senator in America, a philanthropist in South Africa, and the president of a megacorporation in Singapore.

"Nothing can stop me. Not All Might, not his students, not even Shigaraki. My victory was secured before my foes were born, death is only the beginning" said All for One, his voice barely a whisper. "You will remember the cost of failure".

Toga found herself outside the building, walking on the dry grass. From the outside, the building was imposing and monolithic, made of grey cement. She walked away from the building, making for the treeline with as steady a walk as she could muster.

She heard the child´s laugh again, to her left, and turned to face a completely empty patch of dry

grass. Toga kept walking, despite more laughter and new sounds, mechanical sounds, the kind old machines made, whirring and whining.

Every time she looked, she found nothing, so she kept going. The strange tower loomed and at this distance she could see some sort of industrial plant around it.

As she looked at the tower, she heard a soft sound like, a gas stove firing up, as a flash of light erupted. Her whole body disappearing, consumed by the flash, burnt to the last atom.

Himiko Toga opened her eyes. She was on the ground of the midnight bus, surrounded by people. A man with a black eye held her hands as tenderly as possible, while keeping her restrained.

A stout woman with a curly afro stood behind the man, and seeing her open her eyes, said “Are you alright, miss? You started screaming in your sleep and kept going for five straight minutes, we had to hold you so you wouldn’t hurt yourself. You can let her go now, Mark”.

The man let Toga´s arms free, and they limped to her side. Her eyes were bloodshot and her breathing ragged.

“I´m fine, it just…felt too real.” She managed to finally say after a few moments as she regained her composure. She implied being an armed forces veteran to get the people off her and get some rest at least, if she could not have sleep.

As the stout woman left her after saying to ask for help if needed, Toga slumped back onto the seat, trying to get comfortable again.

Not only had the nightmare thrown her to the ground while thrashing around, tensing her leg muscles into some nasty cramps, but she had also lost the sweet spot on the seat. With public transportation methods comfort was hit or miss at best, and now she could barely rest her back on the ugly seat.

Sighing, she grabbed her phone from where the people had placed it, on the sit next to her. At least she hadn’t broken the screen, like the last four phones she had had. The Pro Hero: Lemillion case had been as tough as the hero when hitting the floor, it seemed.

She looked at the time and date, to see if she had actually managed a decent sleep time, but it had barely been two hours. *Seems the dream was quick.*

Toga had learned a lot about sleep in the past year, trying to make the best out of dreamless periods, while doing her utmost to avoid the times one dreamt, with varying degrees of success.

It was 3 AM of March 30th, the last official school day for most high schools in Japan. Unlocking her phone, Toga checked all over for news of Izuku Midoriya, his friends, his class, UA, even about retired All Might.

Class 1 A´s graduation would be a huge event, the brightest new stars of the hero world, far surpassing the exploits of their European or American counterparts.

Even before graduating, Izuku´s classmates Todoroki and Bakugou were already the number 26 and 25 heroes, Shinsou was supposedly involved in raids on terrorists globally, even the ones Toga had barely considered, like Aoyama and Koda, had grown to have substantial fanbases.

As the real news started repeating, Toga looked at the latest gossip, spread by the teen magazines

Mount Lady and Midnight edited.

"*Todoroki and Yaomomo together again, KiriBaku confirmed (with pics!), conspiracy photos (Bigfoot Style!) of where Hagakure has been, a poetry column by Tokoyami…where´s my Izu-Izu?*

Gossip about class B, nobody cares! After scrolling past a few spicy posts discussing Hawks and the Todoroki family, and a ton of Hatsume Industries ads, she found no new gossip about her Izu-Izu.

With a sigh she opened up a video from her favourites tab, a video where Midoriya played with a small girl and a slightly bigger boy, whose cap had two horns. Izuku laid down on the floor, his eyes closed as he said "Help!".

Both kids came running, their miniature capes fluttering, and yelled "We are here!". Midoriya laughed as the kids "saved" him. The video ended with the hero hugging the children.

As every time, she felt butterflies in her stomach watching her hero, as well as the flashing commands. *Kill him. Hurt him. Cut him. BECOME HIM.* The suggestions had ruled her mind for so long…but now she knew their source.

The need to hurt Izuku Midoriya, to kill and replace him, it fought against her admiration for the all-loving hero. But her mind was not strong enough to be fully hers yet.

Extracting a book from her Chicago-themed backpack, a recent acquisition, she settled down to read. An old book, about a war of families in a fantasy realm, with dragons and ice zombies. It had taken a great effort of medical Quirks to keep the author alive in the sixty years he took to write the last two books, as far as Toga knew.

It made her sad, as she had finished reading them all in a few months. On her second read now, she barely noticed how night became day and the bus stopped, half way to Los Angeles.

The middle of nowhere, USA, seemed dusty and rather cowboy-y, she noticed.

Using cash from one of her "borrowed" wallets, Toga bought herself some breakfast and a newspaper at the gas station.

American heroes are boring…always having drama and twelve-man "Civil Wars". The local news included the sale of cows, a rodeo coming to town in two weeks; national news bored her as well, she could not care less about the President´s son being an internet mastermind behind his father´s election.

Toga looked up from the paper, noticing a man on a nearby field staring in her direction. Her instincts flared up. *Fight or flight.*

Outwardly calm, she climbed back on the bus. It would leave soon, and even if whoever was following her attacked, she could pretty much take out three quarters of the world´s heroes, soldiers and policemen in close quarters combat.

Or at least that was her educated guess. Still, she checked her weapons and prepared for a fight. A polymer fighting dagger, a synthetic garrotte, a toothbrush shiv taped discretely should she be searched. She was ready.

Three hours passed, then four, then five. The megacity of Los Angeles came into view, and soon caught them in traffic. Hunger gnawed at Toga´s belly; she almost preferred having to fight heroes to being in sight of street food stands but not being allowed to just leave the bus to buy some.

The gridlock was ridiculous. *This is why Japan uses trains.* After seven hours on a bus, Toga stretched as she finally arrived at the station.

The target this time was Senator Darren Simpson, a supporter of American heroes meddling with international villain activity. Toga could see how All for One would have such a person on his post-mortem hit list.

Thankfully, the Senator´s office was listed on address books, and no one gave a second glance to another businesswoman on the area.

After changing on a nearby bathroom, Toga took the opportunity to check herself out on the mirror.

Having an "active lifestyle" for as long as she could remember had kept her in good shape, perhaps not the peak condition a hero´s nutrition could afford, but she still felt confident.

Wearing high heels, a business outfit with a grey pencil skirt and eyeglasses, and her hair swept back to hide her uneven bangs, she kind of liked this look. *Maybe Izu-Izu will like this when I see him next.* A part of her mind replied to that: *When we kill him.*

Staking out targets was almost as boring as being on a bus. With a partner it could have been exhilarating, fun, intimate even. At last, at 6 P.M., the Senator left his office, and climbed into a limousine a clumsy businesswoman had slipped onto earlier.

After apologizing for her clumsiness to the bodyguard that had helped her from the floor, Toga had left the area and activated the tracker, disguised as a humble chewed bubble gum, placed just on the inside of the bottom of the front bumper. Tracking it with an app, Toga thanked the villain smuggler Giran, in whatever prison he might be; she hoped he at least had good rations.

The car took the Senator to a large town house in the suburbs, gated, with heavy security. That was good progress for the moment, Toga had a couple hours more to buy supplies and prepare for another kill.

At 9 P.M., Himiko Toga stood on the third-floor balcony of a building a kilometre away from her target. Glass gates rarely had alarms, and the apartment´s owners were not particularly cautious.

Climbing up had been easy enough, opening the door easier still, and the alarm had never even been armed. Setting down her new stuff, Toga took off her shoes and armed it for herself, reminding herself to turn it off after leaving.

The high heels she had mugged a woman in the morning for had left her feet, used to flat heels, rather sore. The professional looking pantyhose came after, with the rest of the business outfit.

She tossed it all in a corner and unpacked her new gear. Mid-heel combat boots, dark fatigues, the kind she had seen American SWAT teams using, with built in kneepads and elbow pads, a Middle Eastern men´s headscarf, and a nice belt where she could stuff all her weapons in.

She had wanted a gun too, but the city seemed to be as devoid of gun stores as Japan. L.A. was not the America she had been promised by the movies. Fully kitted up, she posed in front of a nice full body mirror the apartment´s owners had. With the lights turned off, she was very hard to spot.

That business done, Toga tossed all into another corner and, digging from inside her backpack, took out her Pro Hero Deku oversized t-shirt, and threw herself on the bed.

It had been some two months since she had slept in a bed, it felt good. And with the t-shirt, she felt safe from the nightmares. For the first time in weeks, she slept the whole night.

The sunshine bounced up the mirror she had moved the day before, hitting her eyes. “For fuck's sake, someone get that light.” she mumbled.

A few moments later she realized no one was going to get the light and opened her eyes. Grumbling, she turned the mirror around, and got another hour of restful sleep.

At last she woke up completely, refreshed and ready to take on the world, and with a bedhead that made Eraserhead´s “Quirkhair” look well groomed.

The hair could wait, though, as she could almost taste a possible breakfast she could make in the apartment´s kitchen. A quick scan found her some bacon and bread she could toast, and some sports drinks on the fridge that eased the thirst she called “nap thirst”.

On the label she found the Pro Hero Superbowl, a hero dressed like an American Football player in blue and silver. A proper breakfast brought a blush to her face almost comparable with drinking blood back in the day.

As it was almost noon, she still had hours and hours to kill before the senator met his end. Soon she was checking the internet for gossip on Izuku Midoriya again.

From the times they had actually talked without trying to kill each other, she had come to admire how great of a guy he was.

On his position, she would have cut Bakugou's throat years ago, but the green hero had somehow managed to turn his former bully into a steadfast ally and almost a friend.

Toga could easily picture all of the girls in UA falling for her Izu-Izu, even without her obsession, and so had been extremely jealous of them all.

When jokingly Dabi had suggested making a bet for who Midoriya would end up dating, Toga had almost stabbed him, and had actually stabbed him when he had suggested the frog girl, Tsuyu.

Twice had voted for Hagakure, the invisible girl, and then changed his mind to Mina Ashido, Shigaraki had supported the inventor girl Hatsume, Spinner had suggested Todoroki, which earned him a scowl from Dabi, Mr. Compress chose Yaomomo, and finally Kurogiri had stated that he would end up with Uraraka “for obvious reasons”. His mist form saved him from a stab, as Toga yelled that Ochako was as boring as a brick.

A smile had shown up on her face, unexpectedly at the memory. A few months after that moment, the League of Villains had attacked Tartarus, the world´s safest prison, and managed to extract All for One.

If she still had enough room in her broken mind for normal nightmares, that mission could have filled them; clone after clone of Twice getting his head blown up by special forces snipers, Spinner fighting with Endeavor in a ring of flames, Dabi´s duel with Katsuki Bakugou and the collateral damage it caused, Nomus losing control and attacking friend and foe alike…and her fight against Miruko, the strongest female hero in Japan.

A knife in each hand, Toga had fought the Pro Hero with all the technique and speed she could, but she was badly outmatched. The hero was taller, stronger and was trained to fight people much stronger than Toga.

Even with all the dirty tricks she knew as muscle memory from whatever she had been doing before finding herself in Tokyo, she could barely keep up defensively.

When an explosion rocked the prison, Toga took her chance and jumped off the prison, into one of Ujiko´s stinky portals. Alive on the other side, she ran and ran.

When she recovered, she found out all that had happened afterwards; Nejire Hadou had restrained Shigaraki; Shouto Todoroki had confronted Dabi before his fight with Bakugou and Shinsou Hitoshi ended with anyone dying, and had managed to get the villain to surrender; Mr. Compress had been knocked out and captured by Deku and Froppy.

Endeavor had ended up burning Spinner with third degree burns all over as he “subdued” him, permanently crippling the Stain fanboy´s left arm and leaving him burnt worse than Dabi.

Twice had run away after his mask had burned in Endeavor´s fire, quickly losing his mind and throwing himself at the police on instinct. The police had shot him dead. Ujiko had been caught just a moment after transporting Toga to safety, captured by Hawks and his avian apprentice, Tokoyami, and had fallen to the ground, dying.

But it was all for naught for the heroes, as All for One was released, and after a quick, undecisive fight with Deku and the yet-unnamed-hero Bakugou, made his escape.

A week later, Toga had been caught by another disaster, this time natural, as an atypical typhoon hit the island she was hiding, Okinawa.

Trapped under a collapsed building, she had been saved by a green hero, and in the end, she had saved him too, in a day they had promised not to ever tell about.

If All for One had not said the words, THOSE words, she would have turned herself in at the end of the month, and maybe she would be with Izuku now.

That thought made her blush again, even harder. But the fact was, she had just spent half an hour thinking about Tartarus and fighting and stuff when she should have been checking her Izuku for any new girlfriends she might have to kill.

Another check and it was all good. Midoriya kept to himself, but Toga was still unsure why he wasn’t just dating one of the girls. She was sure Mina would have asked him out by now, hell maybe even Ochako had finally gotten the nerve, but it seemed nothing had happened.

Maybe he just takes a naked Hagakure on dates? With a click she blocked her phone, connecting it to her peeled off cable charger. She really should take more care of her stuff, she thought, as she tossed some more of her stuff with no care.

It was now 1 A.M. Toga had even gone as far as to do actual exercise to pass the time, she had been incredibly bored, but now it was time. Walking at a leisurely pace, she soon reached the politician´s house.

Two bodyguards protected the east side, compared to the three at the north, south and west, plus the two patrolling the perimeter, and an unknown number inside the house.

Unsheathing her knife, a Fairbairn Sykes dagger she had acquired a year ago, Toga approached the guard post, sticking to the shadows as much as possible.

As one of the guards, a man with a hamster head for a Quirk lit up a cigarette, she took advantage of the glow to rush the last few meters, appearing in front of them like a phantom.

The hamster head man fell first, a well-placed punch at the windpipe silencing whatever cry for help he might have uttered.

With her left hand, Toga used her garrotte wire as a lasso, binding the other guard´s right hand before he could reach for a gun at his side. He seemed to be quirkless, but as Toga grappled him into a sleeper hold, he had no time to prove otherwise.

A swift kick knocked out the hamster head. *I'm not killing innocents if I can, Izu-Izu.*

There was no time to hide the bodies, or even collect blood for the infiltration. She had to evade the perimeter guards and she had no time to lose.

Trotting while keeping low and in the shadows, Toga came across a one of the patrol guards. His eyes emitted light, what a double-edged quirk!

Carefully evading his cone of vision, Toga positioned herself behind him, kicked behind his knee to lower him to the ground, and choked the man out.

Free guns! She took the guard´s pistol, an integrally supressed 9 millimetre. The rifle was too cumbersome to carry, despite having interesting accessories.

With a running start, Toga grabbed hold of the first-floor roof and mantled over. Silently padding over the roof, she grabbed onto the second story roof and climbed again. On the roof top, she walked silently over to the other side, where the target slept.

Lowering her head in order to see the wall below her, Toga found two sets of windows, and positioning herself over the larger ones, she lowered herself to the windowsill.

Lockpicking the window, Toga heaved herself through the window, scanning the dark room. Her yellow, cat-like eyes gave her slightly enhanced night vision, as an unrelated side effect of whatever quirks her parents may have had.

She looked around, and…*gotcha.*

The target, Senator Darren Simpson, slept in the bed. His long white hair was unmistakeable.

Toga took out the silenced pistol, and fired at the sleeping man, twice in the chest and once in the head, *just like Kurogiri taught us.* The moment the third bullet hit, a person rose up from beside the senator. *A wife?*

The woman had leapt at her, with clearly some enhanced strength. She had reddish brown, featherlike hair but otherwise looked ordinary. Dodging, Toga emptied the rest of the pistol´s magazine on the senator. The empty gun was a lousy weapon, so she tossed it at the woman, feinting for the head but actually throwing it at the knee.

Off balance, the enemy was vulnerable, so Toga tackled her. The woman didn’t have the strength

Izu-Izu had on a single hair, so Toga's tackle took her down through the half open window, landing on top of the woman.

Toga rolled over, quickly recovering and drawing her garrotte, ready to catch a punch or kick and force the woman to surrender or risk cutting her own veins.

As expected, the woman threw a punch, but it was too fast, and Toga could neither block it or ensnare her arm.

Then the woman attempted a leg sweep, Toga leapt over it, positioning herself behind the woman and entangling her neck with the garrotte. “I don’t want to kill you, surrender!” yelled Toga, as she tightened her grip around the wire´s handles. Her nose smelled blood; the woman was trying to hold the wire with her hands.

As the woman struggled, Toga let the garrotte go, and leapt as far as she could. The woman would most likely not follow immediately, so she had to escape quickly.

Running towards the eastern entrance, she found no resistance, but behind her she could already hear the guards running toward her, shouting at each other.

She ran like an Ingenium with diarrhoea would run to a bathroom, a mad sprint to the exit.

As she jumped over the unconscious bodies of the guards, gunshots zoomed by, barely missing her. A shot grazed her thigh, making her wince in pain. She made for an alley between two houses and climbed over a couple of fences. *Suburbia is shit for hiding.*

She heard police sirens, headed towards the senator´s mansion; in a few minutes they would coordinate properly and try to fence her in the area. The only way out of being caught was to be outside the search area and become incognito, at least that had been Shigaraki´s way of explaining it once, before it became a discussion with Dabi over which videogame in the series about stealing cars was better.

Shigaraki, always a hipster, had stood by the fourth game to the death!

Getting out of a search area would have been easier if she could impersonate someone else, but Toga had no blood available, except for the small trickle of her own blood on her wounded leg. And that was no use, obviously. So, she would have to run, and hide and run some more.

Thirty minutes later, Toga was still running. The police sirens were still faintly in the distance, she had passed the circle. But now American heroes would most likely be on the hunt for her. Someone with night vision or infrared could find her easily enough from a height, maybe another blood-quirk user could follow the trail her wound had left, maybe she'd stumble on a vigilante.

Looking around as she caught her breath, Toga found a passable hiding spot, a sewer entrance. Removing the lid, she lowered herself down the manhole, onto the sidewalk on one side of the stream of sewage. She wrapped the headscarf tighter around her mouth and nose; the smell was twice as bad as Ujiko´s portals.

She walked at a sure pace in the direction she had been going before, following the sewer´s twists and turns until she found the sewer equivalent of crossroads. Toga went right, and kept going for a while longer, and emerged at what she thought was enough distance.

On the distance, she could see a police helicopter, its searchlight illuminating suburban houses. A reporter helicopter was rushing to the scene from another part of town, escorted by two people flying next to it; Toga had no time to think about their flight being quirk based or tech based.

Walking slowly, keeping to the shadows, Toga slipped unnoticed into the edge of the suburb. A highway and some privately owned land separated her from the rest of the city, looking both ways, she crossed the highway, sprinting the whole time.

On the other side, she walked beside the private land´s fence for a while, until she saw a dump truck that could conceal her. Jumping onto the back of the truck, she pulled up and got inside the truck´s box, which was filled with construction grade sand.

Toga let the truck carry her for half an hour, and then bailed, rushing over the highway barrier to avoid incoming cars. Now she was well away from the crime scene, and near a low-density residential area.

Hiking over to a nearby strip mall, she called for a cab with an app on her phone. The driver asked no questions as they got to her "borrowed" apartment.

The credit transfer was successful, she waved the driver good bye, and jogged upstairs to the apartment. She bandaged her leg haphazardly; she wasn't going to bleed out, so she could bother in the morning.

She threw her new gear, which she was sure Shigaraki would have called her "tactical espionage action" stuff, to a corner, put on the Deku t-shirt, and slumped on the bed, exhausted.

Himiko Toga walked through a large gate, the letters U and A proudly engraved on the metal. Glancing down, she could see the UA uniform on herself. Her hands were blurry, like everything on the edge of her vision. *Yep, its a dream, but is it a nightmare?*

She looked around, she had never actually been inside the Hero Academy, but in the dream´s certainty, she knew where to go. Step by step, she neared a classroom in the beautiful glass towers. 1 A. Part of her knew Izuku Midoriya was no longer on the first year, but she didn't question the vision.

The door opened, and she saw the whole class, as she had last seen them. Some wore their hero costumes, like Deku and Ingenium II, others the school uniform, the ones she had almost no knowledge of, like the lips guy or the animals' guy, were little more than blurry figures.

But instead of the teacher being Eraserhead, as she knew, the pro Hero Miruko sat on the chair, swivelling around to face her. *Oh no, not her.*

The hero´s eyes burned in dark red flames as she stared at Toga. Toga couldn't move, her legs shook, her arms wouldn't go up to defend herself.

She looked around and tried to yell for help, only managing a whispered "Izu…" before a strong kick connecting with her jaw. Miruko stepped back for a moment, letting the students gang up on her.

It took all her willpower to get up and fight. A knife was in her hand, carving up first the blurry students, then the one with multiple arms that had kept her from Izuku in the training camp, she grabbed a dwarf with stupid hair and ran her blade across his throat, almost decapitating the poor bastard.

She could see Izuku trying to get to her, but Todoroki and Bakugou held him. She had only looked away, but Miruko had taken the chance to close in on her and disarm her.

The pro hero punched and kicked her, Toga´s body rag dolling around until she finally fell. The hero held her down and made her look at Izuku again.

Now he wasn't held back by his two friends, but he was in the arms of Mina Ashido, kissing her. Around him, Tsuyu, Ochako and Momo fluttered, asking for their turn. Tears burned in Toga´s eyes and she closed her eyes, supressing a scream.

Its just a dream, just a dream! I will wake up! Miruko spoke into her ear "There is no redemption for you".

Himiko Toga opened her eyes. They stung with tears. For a moment she was confused, but then she remembered the dream. She cried in earnest, like she hadn't cried in a lot of time.

As she dried her tears with the apartment´s bedsheets, she heard a small sound out of place.

The sound of the door opening and a metal can bouncing on the floor.

There was a blinding flash of light accompanied by a deafening bang, and Toga was caught unawares. Disoriented, she reached for her knife and threw it towards where the door was supposed to be.

Her ears rang so she couldn't know if she had hit anything. A blunt object hit her forehead, and she fell onto the bed. Her hands were held together, to stop her from reaching for another weapon, and she was restrained. "I know my rights! I want my phone call!" she yelled, before an injection of some kind put her to sleep again.

At least this time there were no dreams.

Agent Anna Dobinek removed her combat mask as the villain girl stopped squirming and fell unconscious. The rest of her four-man team looked at her, waiting for orders; Csaba still held the zip cuffs, Anderson adjusted her balaclava to scratch her nose, Talbot tapped his helmet with his baton.

"I´ll call it in, get her on the van. Anderson, grab her stuff, it is evidence." The team acknowledged and got to the task.

The target, alias "Himiko Toga", was a young woman, half Japanese if she could guess correctly, of slightly below average height, with a deceptively average build; her casefile had her fighting toe to toe with the Amazonian Miruko for almost three minutes, before being transported via portal by an accomplice.

Dressed in a t-shirt a few sizes too big and her underwear, Toga had clearly not expected the fight, if the capture could even be called that.

Around the bedroom, Anderson was gathering the spread-out possessions of the messy criminal, sensing around with her hands, her hyperactive sense of smell guiding her to every item.

Christa Anderson had been born practically deaf, and as her quirk, a hyper sensitive olfactory system, developed her eyesight had started going too, with myopia so severe it was practically blindness by the time she reached adulthood.

Still, the gray-haired woman had gone up to join the Las Vegas SWAT team, earned a reputation as a one-person breaching team, and gotten a recommendation for further government work.

Anna clicked her push-to-talk radio “Texas Red, this is Holy Diver, target secured. We need clean up at 1547 Roscomare Road, third floor. Requesting cold extract, Van Nuys Airport.”

“Holy Diver, Texas Red copies all, see you at the airport”.

Anderson gave her an all clear hand sign. “Masks on”. The flexible ballistic mask fit Anna´s head like a silk glove, had a simple heads up display, and could take a point-blank shot from a 44. Magnum.

Her partners wore similar masks, fitted to their quirks. A few neighbours had woken up and intercepted the team on the building´s entrance, curious about the noise they had heard earlier.

Anna showed them her Department of Defence badge and said, “We were sent to help the LAPD with a case, no need to worry.” Their questions about the cuffed, unconscious girl, met deaf ears.

The van, a discreet green vehicle of a recent model, awaited them. The door slid open, revealing the support team members, Isaacs and Garza. The villain girl was secured to a seat, and the team took a breather, removing their masks.

As Garza started bickering with Talbot, Csaba looked at Anna “So this girl just killed a Senator? In the middle of Bel Air? That is pretty intense”.

Csaba was a middle aged, bulky man, with six fingers on each hand and seven toes on each foot. A former DEVGRU operator, his heavy boots now served the government faithfully.

Anna nodded, and said “Still, doesn’t explain why they sent *us*. America has thousands of heroes, pretty much any team could have caught her with enough support. She´s pretty good, but a quirkless SWAT team would have been good enough, I think. No offense, Talbot”.

The quirkless Brit, loaned by the MI6, just glared in mock anger before giving her a long laugh and turning back to chat with their driver, Garza. “The Director must have some plan with the girl, we´ll ask Texas Red on the jet.”

At the runway, a curly haired man in a dark blue jacket and khakis waited in front of the jet, his hands on his belt loops and his feet spread apart in a powerful pose.

“Himiko Toga, I´m CIA” he said.

Agent Dobinek brought her hand to her face in frustration, the villain wasn’t even awake to hear the agent. From behind “CIA” walked a grizzled old man in a dark “Southern Gentleman” style suit, with a matching dark Stetson.

“Flight Plan, how many times do I have to tell you not to do that every time we pick up a target” said Deputy Director Holden Johns, also known as the Big Iron Hero: Texas Red.

“Nice to see you all again, kids.” he said, giving the team of veteran operators his “kindly grandfather” smile. Flight Plan, the field agent, helped Talbot get Toga on the jet, and the team got to their seats.

“Site Sierra Delta, please” said Texas Red to the pilots, and they set off.

The cowboy hero took a seat opposite Anna, and spoke “Three kills of civilians, including the poor senator last night. Twenty kills of criminals, terrorists and all manner of villain scum. A year and two months of travelling Asia, Europe and America, leaving little trace. The Director has something planned for the Operations Division, the girl´s connections with All for One´s groups can be worth a pretty big buck for the Japanese government, and if the Agency plays its cards right, we may be able to do some pretty big things. You want in on the Project, Holy Diver?”

Anna still wasn’t used to the callsign being spoken like some kind of “Hero name”. The name had come from her weapons instructor at the Agency, as a reference to Ronnie James Dio clumsily wielding a sword in the music video of the same name, as apparently, she fought just as badly.

It was much better than her Green Beret nickname, Craphat, after she had worn her beret all crooked after a night of extra-heavy drinking.

So, Field Agent commander at thirty-five, Holy Diver it was. Anna´s hybrid quirk had been pretty helpful, Night Vision and the capacity to hear underwater, both making her special operations life easier, while giving her basically no drawbacks.

The United States of America had the perfect culture for Anna Dobinek; quirks had appeared in a lower proportion than Europe and a few Asian states like Japan and Singapore, at about 45% of the population having quirks.

The numbers had kept a balance where crime wasn’t overly increased by quirks, while not devolving into discrimination and hatred, as some countries in Africa and the Middle East had.

Some countries had even descended into full blown genocide against quirked and had pretty much cut off ties with the rest of the world. A much peaceful haven for outsiders after quirked heroes took to the streets, America was in a golden age few countries matched, social issues at a much calmer state than before the quirks.

Born to Polish immigrant parents, Anna had taken to the new country and had become extremely proud of it and the progress it was making, and volunteering to fight for it had come naturally to her.

“If it helps the country, I´m in, *pardner*,” she said, doing her cheesiest Texas accent impression.

“Well then, lass, here´s what I can say now. White Stripe will meet us there and run the tests, and an interrogation. You can be bad cop if you wanna. Before we get there, have you decrypted the phone?”

“The password was just “DEKU”; she left some greasy fingerprints less than a day ago. Apparently, it is some Japanese hero around her age, she runs a fan page and her screen background was one of his promotional pictures. The phone´s caller Id says it was sold in New York to a “Maria Antonia Sanchez”, seems it was stolen a couple months back.”

“Give it over to Flight Plan, he has good techies back at base. She only had that phone?”

“She also had an old flip phone, one number in the contacts, called more than seventy times over the past year. Csaba is checking who received the calls.”

From the back of the plane, Csaba called out “We have a name; Izuku Midoriya”.

Dealing with fathers

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

On a comfortable cell deep inside a state-of-the-art prison, Shigaraki Tomura woke up to a new day of being extremely bored. His cell included a bed, a walled off bathroom and even a small sitting area, with a TV and a gaming console.

Prison was somehow the best thing to happen to Shigaraki in quite a while. He could lounge around, play games to his heart´s content, he could request any book he wished. He had clean clothes, hygiene products, and best of all, the prison had fitted him with a special pair of gloves, that covered the thumb and two of his fingers, stopping a five-finger grip from dissolving things!

The gloves´ inventor had even given him an hour-long explanation of the materials one of the Heroes had made for her, how through Quirk analysis she had designed the “babies”, a fifteen-minute tangent about explosions, and another twenty minutes explaining the logo weaved in the material “Hatsume Industries”.

But for Shigaraki, the best of the best were the visits he was allowed. One visit a day, All Might; Izuku Midoriya; Inspector Tsukauchi; the psychotherapist, the hero All for One had rendered quirkless, Ragdoll; the hero that had caught him at the Tartarus escape, Nejire Hadou. He remembered their first meeting with a small smile, things had changed a lot in a little over a year.

Tartarus was perhaps the best defended installation in all of Asia. It would have been much easier to steal a nuclear submarine and nuke a country, but then again, All for One on the loose was quite a bit more dangerous than a nuclear threat.

Before being presumed dead after fighting All Might, All for One had been number two on international “Most Wanted” lists, just after the African warlord and villain Ndege Mweusi, who had created his own state in the heart of Africa and gone to war with the USA. On the third through sixth spots on the lists were different proxies and associates of All for One, on all continents.

Of those only one remained, a person only known as Pestilentia, operating in Europe. Shigaraki had tried getting Pestilentia´s help to bust All for One out of prison, unsuccessfully. With no help coming, Shigaraki used every resource he still had.

Kurogiri had been captured, so he had replaced him with the closest replacement Giran could find them; Ujiko. Shigaraki still had forty-three Nomus, but none were as strong as High End or the USJ Nomu.

Dabi´s fire burned ever stronger, Spinner had become a strong warrior, Twice had much more control over his mind and clones, and Toga seemed to “remember” combat skills from out of nowhere.

A short campaign of discreet robberies got them funds and weapons, and Shigaraki was able to hire enough mercenaries to finally assault the prison, from the Praying Mantis Private Military Company.

The attack took place on January 13th, at sunrise. Two helicopters filled with the shady American

mercs Shigaraki had contracted would rappel onto the prison roof, covered by two attack helicopters, while an armoured vehicle attacked the bridge entrance. Another chopper carried the League of Villains, ready to exploit the diversion the mercs would create and get inside.

The battle started when the armoured vehicle rumbled on the streets, racing for the prison´s bridge. Its main gun, an anti-tank canon, firing at the security checkpoint with explosive ammunition. From a few miles out, the merc helicopters readied and flew out to play their part.

In just a few minutes, the security force on Tartarus was engaged on the front and from above, police and heroes fighting fire with fire against the mercenary force. The call for backup had been sent immediately, and the heroes had to be on the way.

As Shigaraki´s helicopter landed on the corpse-riddled roof of Tartarus, the League got to their positions. Mr Compress would take a forward position on a city building and stall the heroes´ air transports.

Dabi glided down onto the bridge propelled by his flames, Spinner gathered a squad of mercs around the busted anti-aircraft guns of the roof, and the rest split to breach the inside of the prison. Toga and Twice would clear the top floors, while Shigaraki and Ujiko would melt the floors and clear the lower basement. The fighting was terrifying and exhilarating at the same time.

His quirk was not suited at all for a gunfight, so he shot at the police guards with a submachine gun, while Ujiko held a pistol.

Melting holes into the floors, Shigaraki´s squad had made it half-way to the basement when Dabi radioed in “Shigaraki, the heroes are here, at least three teams. Endeavor, Lemillion and Deku…” the message was interrupted by the sound of motorcycles, cursing and Dabi´s flames. Shigaraki continued, deeper into the prison. He managed to sneak up on a guard, and, threatening him with disintegration, had found All for One´s location.

Pleased at the guard cooperating, he had Ujiko send him into the river around Tartarus instead of killing him. “League, I have his location! We are five floors away!”. The only answer was Spinner asking for help. “Toga, Twice! Get up there! Give us time!”

Now he was outside All for One´s cell, the strongest thing he had ever seen. Beyond the glass, his sensei smiled. But as they approached, sentry turrets descended from the ceiling, red laser beams aiming.

Shigaraki felt like it was a quick time event, as the adrenalin made time slower. He jumped out the way just in time, as the sentry gun´s multiple barrels spooled and fired, shredding the mercs to pieces.

Ujiko had managed to transport away, and radioed in “Shigaraki, I´m useless down there, I´ll go with the others.”

Now alone, Shigaraki had to deal with the sentry guns before he could melt sensei´s prison. The solution to the problem made him feel he had God Mode on: he would melt the ceiling, walk up to the turrets from above, and melt them.

A short while later, he scratched his neck as his smuggest smile ever graced his dry lips. The guns were melted slag. His right hand went to the polymer wall separating him and All for One. The material was strong and resilient, but his Quirk ate through it like a hot knife through butter.

Finally, he had made a man-sized hole through the wall, all five meters thick. All for One had a set

of turrets trained on his head, but moving around carefully, Shigaraki melted them one by one, as their targeting system was complex, but completely focused on sensei. All for One´s restraints came off, and Sensei was free at last.

All for One´s mangled head looked up at the turrets and said, “Took you long enough, Tomura.”

The villains made their way up two levels, until they came upon the first hero team unto the breach, UA´s Big Three: Lemillion, Suneater and Wave Motion. Suneater sprouted tentacles, and Lemillion charged All for One.

The supervillain had walked in obvious show of muscle atrophy, but activating multiple quirks, engaged the heroes. Shigaraki charged the female hero, trying to close the distance, but the hero´s shockwaves were powerful and precise, and he couldn’t get close enough. The hero could only have been a couple years younger, but he felt she was almost toying with him.

Shigaraki quickly looked at All for One, just as a massive energy attack came from the supervillain, knocking aside the heroes he had been fighting and sending Shigaraki crashing onto one of Wave Motion´s own shockwaves.

The clash knocked the air out of Shigaraki´s lungs, and he felt some broken bones. The female hero was on the ground a few meters away. Shigaraki felt someone pull on his shirt and saw All for One ´s face up close. He started speaking “Dojo. Sword. Hand. Decay. Sky. Action. Cherry Blossom. Death. Activate.”

Shimura Tenko was at home, playing with his dad, with his action figures. Twelve-inch tall figures, representing extreme sportsmen and heroes.

On his right hand, he had his favourite, Señor Acción, the sports champion and secret agent! His dad had his friendly rival, Speedsman. Their extreme snowboards were some pieces of a cardboard box, that they surfed down the living room couch.

It was Saturday, and Tenko´s mom had gone to see granny. As Señor Acción won another slide down Sky Storm Mountain, Tenko heard the doorbell ring. “I´ll get the door daddy!” he yelled and rushed to the door.

He opened it and saw a man in a blood-soaked dark suit, with a scarred and bruised face that looked somehow like a hero´s face should look.

But the eyes scared Tenko, and then the man smiled. Tenko was frozen with fear. He was a bad man. He tried to yell for his dad but could only make a sad whimper that barely made a sound.

Dad yelled from behind Tenko “Stay away from my son!”, and his strong arms carried Tenko away. Tenko managed to yell, hoping the neighbours could hear “HELP!”.

Dad took Tenko into a room and locked the door. He grabbed a bo staff from behind a bed and got into a fighting stance. He looked back at his son, and said “I love you, son. Never forget it.” The entire wall was pulled away by the stranger, his right arm had grown immensely.

Tenko was afraid! Daddy had no Quirk! Where were the heroes? A bo staff was little match for the stranger, who had wrapped dad in glowing black chains that sprouted from his fingertips. The chains tightened, with a horrible crunching sound. The stranger dropped dad just in front of Tenko and knelt before the child.

“What is your Quirk?” he asked with a voice that felt somehow familiar but was also completely alien.

Tenko heard himself speak, with no control “I-I d-don´t have a Qui-irk”.

The stranger´s eyes twinkled at his response “We can´t have that, oh no. I will give you one.” A black limb extended from the stranger´s back, like a spider´s leg made of obsidian, and the limb stabbed Tenko in the neck, directly in his spine.

Cold fire burned through his body as the appendage sent a wave of energy into him. He lost control of his body and a seizure started. Tenko felt his leg muscles cramp and tense in painful ways, while his arms flailed wildly, hitting himself in the face and body. He could feel a warm and wet sensation and felt water dripping down his leg.

He cried and screamed. And then he was dropped down on the floor, falling on his left knee. He screamed again. The stranger grabbed Tenko and placed him in front of his dad. The chains had wrapped around dad´s mouth too.

A flash of light caught Tenko´s attention, as the stranger had snapped a photo with a polaroid camera. He shook it a bit to reveal the photo and left the room. He had a pair of knives and a permanent marker on his hands. He scribbled something on the photograph and stabbed it on the wall behind dad.

“Do you want to help your daddy?” asked the stranger. Tenko nodded, he had to save dad! “Then you will help me stop his pain” two more spider legs appeared from the man´s back, held Tenko´s hand, and brought it close to dad´s face.

Then Tenko´s hand touched.

And daddy yelled in pain. Tenko´s hand moved forward. He tried pulling back, but the spider legs were too strong. Dad was in pain, he was dying! Tenko´s hand was killing daddy!

He tried to grab the obsidian limbs with his left hand, but the stranger caught his arm at the wrist, and brought his left hand to dad´s face too. Tenko tried to close his eyes, but tiny spider legs caught his eyelids and kept his gaze focused on his dad´s eyes, as his face dissolved.

Dad had stopped screaming, Tenko had not.

He was released, and tears filled his eyes. He tried to hold his dad´s body, but it melted to his touch. The body twitched and dad´s left hand covered Tenko´s face.

It felt safe! The rest of the arm melted around the hand, and soon the hand became rigid. Strong hands pulled him away. Nothing remained but dust and the hand on his face.

The stranger removed the hand, and took out his camera again, snapping another instant picture. Again, he scribbled something and nailed it to the wall with a knife. The spider legs held Tenko close, by the wrists, as the stranger walked out the house, and into a nearby alley.

He pointed at the house, half its wall crumbling down. On cue, two heroes arrived; a massive blonde titan of a man with strange hair and blue eyes, and a strong hero with grey hair and a yellow and white outfit. The bigger hero broke down the wall and rushed inside, followed closely by the older hero. “NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!” yelled the hero, his mighty voice carrying over to Tenko´s ears.

An obsidian spider leg stabbed Tenko in the spine again. “All Might did not arrive on time to save

you, *Tomura Shigaraki.* He can not save people, only spread the violence. What happened today, he caused it."

After a few minutes, Tomura stood up in the alley. Something horrible had happened! He had a Quirk, a horrible Quirk! He had killed his dad! Tomura was afraid, terrified, he ran.

Shigaraki woke up on the futuristic corridor of Tartarus, his arms restrained behind his back, as the hero Wave Motion patted his back, trying to calm him down. He had been crying, he had lost the hand for his face, his throat was hoarse from yelling.

He broke into tears again, repeating over and over, between sobs "I surrender". The hero helped him sit and hugged him.

The simple action, that little bit of empathy, of humanity, had almost made the world right again. When he finally ran out of tears, he managed to say "You saved me. I know who I was. I know I was Tenko Shimura." She had smiled at him, and said "Well, I am Nejire Hadou, nice to meet you!".

Nejire had helped him up and gently led him to the outside. A repair crew was placing a metal bridge extension over a hole that had been burned off, the surviving mercenaries were in cuffs and being led to armoured police vehicles. Less than a third were still alive.

Nejire led Sigaraki to a heavy helicopter, a military model with two rotors. Sitting aboard it was Dabi, covered in what looked like Eraserhead´s restraining straps, his hands inside a coolant container, connected to a switch that a young hero with a costume reminiscent of Eraserhead´s held, his eyes daring Dabi to make a move, so his hands could be frozen.

Two closed bodybags were also there, secured to the chopper´s floor. Next to them, a stretcher held Spinner, an IV connected to his reptilian arm. He was unconscious and covered in nasty burns.

Mr. Compress was held similarly to Dabi, his good hand immersed in a sleeve of a purplish liquid, his mask by his side, slashed by gigantic claws. Shigaraki felt a pang of pain, he was guilty of his friends suffering, two of them were dead, another could be dying.

And all to save the man who had destroyed his life, erased his childhood and killed his dad? The guilt was almost unbearable. He turned to the blue haired hero and asked

"W-who…" before being interrupted by the number 1 Hero, Endeavor, who walked out of the cockpit towards the villain, saying "The teleport one and Twice. The police ended him."

The intimidating hero towered above Shigaraki and his eyes were full of hatred. He unlatched Shigaraki´s cuffs and fastened him to a set of chains that dangled from the ceiling, securing his wrists at an angle so he could not touch the cuff or chain.

A few others came into the helicopter, filling up the space. One was the police officer Tsukauchi, who took Endeavor aside to talk; another was a nurse who checked Spinner´s condition quickly.

Then the three UA students Shigaraki knew would be here; Izuku Midoriya, Shouto Todoroki and Katsuki Bakugou, the latter of which was even angrier than usual "…the fucker got away! My power, your power, it was useless!" his hands crackled with small explosions.

Beside him Midoriya had a look of cold rage and frustration, Todoroki looked a bit more resigned, but just as furious. Bakugou punched the wall, denting the metal, but then noticed Dabi "You are

still alive, you shithead? You owe me a fucking bike! It was A GODDAMN HARLEY! You know how hard it is to get one in Japan? Of course you don't, shit-for-brains!"

He raised his hand to blow up the tied up villain, but was caught by the purple haired Eraserhead wannabe´s restraining binds, "I don't want Scarboy´s brother´s brains all over me, mate" he said, in a smug monotone.

Admitting his defeat but losing no anger, Bakugou turned to Endeavor and said "Your shitstain son owes me a Harley!" before storming out. Endeavor included his son in conversation with the detective, and Deku approached Shigaraki and Nejire.

Deku looked more concerned than angry, and said, "What happened to you, Shigaraki? Mirio told me what happened with All for One just now, how he left you behind and you started shouting."

Before Shigaraki could answer, Nejire said "All for One said something, and it seems something snapped in his mind. We should get a psychiatrist, Deku, I don't think the same Shigaraki left Tartarus."

"The *Mei* is ready, Izuku!" said a pink haired girl behind the hero, appearing at a distance even Shigaraki, who had been raised pretty much by a smoke monster villain, could tell was not the polite distance in Japan.

"You named it after yourself?" said the green hero, an incredulous smile on his face. "Why yes, of course! It is the mother of all my babies! And I´m the mother of all the babies! And I wasn't going to name my VTOL after some other scientist, I discovered the element in the fuel myself!" As the girl talked her eyes shone excitedly; Shigaraki thought she was clearly insane.

A few heroes remained, Endeavor, his son, Tsukauchi the detective, the purple haired student, and Nejire, who sat close to Shigaraki. He felt weird about her presence, in general he didn't like people and people didn't like him, but she just sat there like he was normal, humming to herself a pop song.

Shigaraki envied her calm state of mind, he had just gambled everything to save a man who had destroyed his family and ruined his life, he had lost the closest thing he had ever had to friends, and now he would most likely never see them again if they separated them in prison. He thought back to how Kurogiri had pretty much raised him and he felt much more guilt; he hadn't even thought about freeing him instead.

The helicopter flew and headed north. Shigaraki wallowed in regret and self-pity, but eventually his thoughts turned to anger, towards All for One. He had moulded Shigaraki into a tool for his own revenge against All Might, supposedly training him as a successor.

But it turned out he had been the revenge himself; the innocent grandchild of All Might's mentor, turned into a shell of a human being, a killer, a villain. It disgusted Shigaraki to think about all the fabricated grudges All for One had slowly created in him, with just a few suggestions.

He had been prepared to fight the world for the man who had killed his family, seeking the approval of a monster. "Detective, I must speak with you!" he said, in the loudest voice his throat could muster, and the officer approached him.

"What is it?" he said, with distrust.

"I want to confess. I want to speak with Deku and All Might. And if possible, I want to help you bring All for One down. I now see what he made me become, and I want to help."

The cell door alarm brought Shigaraki back to the present. The door opened and in came his psychotherapist, the ex-hero Ragdoll, now the civilian Tomoko Shiretoko.

Her smile was just as bright as when she had been a hero, and her clothes were just as colourful. After being kidnapped and stripped of her Quirk, she had worked hard to finish her degree in psychology, so she could help All for One´s victims. And after Shigaraki´s confession, she had known he was a victim too, and had volunteered to rehabilitate him.

“Hello Tomura! How are you doing today?” asked the therapist, positively beaming. Shigaraki smiled, an actual smile, not the creepy smirk he had before.

It had been good, this time, and he had never felt better. And, if his calendar didn’t lie, on Friday Nejire would come to visit him. He was excited and nervous, the blue-haired hero´s visits made him feel weird and happy. Yeah, life was pretty good.

Izuku Midoriya sat in a café on the Musutafu ward, a nice place Shouto had recommended. Before him sat a man with greying green hair, with glasses and unkempt stubble. He had approached Izuku earlier in the week, asking to come to his graduation, as his father.

The complete stranger said he was Hisashi Midoriya, and had breathed a small puff of green fire to prove it. Izuku had not known how to react and had instead asked the man to meet on Thursday.

Afterwards, he had ended up talking about it with Kacchan, of all people, the angry teen knew just how angry Izuku had to be about his father showing up after all this time and expecting to be welcomed with open arms. Bakugou had actually been surprised and very pleased to hear Izuku say “Fuck” for one more extremely rare occasion.

But in the end Izuku had come to talk to his father.

“I don’t even know what to say to you, father. I don’t know if I should be happy you are finally here, angry that you were never there when I needed you, when mom needed you…I don’t even know who you are, mom removed your photos when I was seven.” Izuku could barely control the tears threatening to flow freely.

He did know one thing, though; he did have a dad, and his name was not Hisashi Midoriya, it was Toshinori Yagi.

“I guess I should have been here...” started the elder Midoriya, but Izuku wasn’t having any excuses today.

“I have broken my bones fifteen times throughout my high school! I have fought villains, I helped end All for One! All for One, you know what that means? Not even a phone call, not even a text! A simple e-mail saying: “I am proud son”! Anything!” now the tears were flowing.

Hisashi tried to comfort his son, to hug him, but Izuku recoiled from his touch, “I needed someone

to be my dad. And I found that person. I…I am not here to invite you to my graduation or to have a place in my life. I don't even want answers for why you did this. I just want you to go back to whatever you were doing. But I do want to ask you something, call it a favour; I want you to talk to mom. She may want to know something, I don't. The dad I have chosen is proud of me, and that is all I need to know."

He started to leave, but Hisashi said, "Wait, Izuku. I heard what you had to say, would you please do the same? If you still want me out of your life I can respect that. I know I have been a father in little more than name, and I could never excuse my behaviour, but I would still like to know the man that you have grown up to be, son.

"If you could give me a chance, maybe not as a dad but at least a person who would be there for you…that is all I ask. A chance to earn your trust, even if I could never earn back your love."

Izuku sighed, this reminded him of all the times Shouto had spoken to him in confidence about his family´s issues.

"I would be hypocrite If I didn't even give you a chance, I´m sorry about that anger. We could chat today, but you will have to buy me a good dinner, I´m missing out on the fresh katsudon from Saitama´s, I was going there with my friends before this came up."

He was still weary of the man, but he seemed not to have an ulterior motive other than getting to know his son, so Izuku thought he could at the very least get dinner from him.

Settling for a nearby steak restaurant, Hisashi and Izuku picked a booth and ordered some cuts of meat, a rather fancier dinner than most Izuku ever ate. Hisashi immediately started asking questions about UA, about his budding hero career, about his friends. "So how did you end up choosing the Deku name? Doesn't it mean useless?"

Izuku explained the whole story; Kacchan´s bullying, Ochako changing the name´s meaning, how he and Kacchan had ended up earning each other´s respect again, and how they were friendly rivals at the moment.

"So, your other friends are Endeavor´s son, the new Ingenium and Uravity?" Izuku explained that he was on friendly terms with everyone in his class and a few on others, and added Tsuyu Asui and Hitoshi Shinsou to the "best friends" list his father had inferred.

When prompted for the All for One story, Izuku had excused himself out of saying the whole tale by implying it was mostly confidential, but he could say one thing: "I punched his ass to oblivion and a villain turned good to help us stop him, for good."

Hisashi understood the hero´s privacy, so he did not pry anymore on the subject, so instead he chose to ask "And how about the girls, son? Do you have a girlfriend?"

Izuku felt a bit flustered to think about that, his first kiss had been with a wanted villain after all, and he couldn't exactly say that, so instead he said "Well, I had a bit of a crush on my friend Ochako, but we…we drifted apart. I kinda also liked Mei and Camie and Mina and Tsuyu for a while…but I kind of want to concentrate on being a hero and college right now"

I dodged a bullet there. Hisashi started talking, but Izuku´s phone started vibrating, and the ringtone blared music "I KEEP MY IDEALS…" he answered the phone quickly, without checking the caller, out of embarrassment of his loud ringtone in an upscale restaurant.

"This is Izuku Midoriya. How can I help you?" A voice answered in English, with a broad Texas

accent “Sorry son, I barely understand Japanese, but they tell me your English is pretty good. I´m calling from America, is this a good time? We didn’t really check for the Japanese time zone before calling.”

“Ah yes, it’s just 9 P.M. here.”

“Good. Listen son, I´m with the US government, on one of the intelligence agencies, All Might can tell you more. Ask him about Texas Red, that’s me. Now, I want to tell you that you are not in trouble, but this here phone links you to a criminal we just caught, so it might be best if you gave us a hand. Help us, help your little friend, and we´ll all be pretty happy! Oh, and she keeps repeating that she knows her rights and demands we let her call you. I don’t wanna go over specifics on this phone, so we´ll contact you on the morning. Remember to ask All Might, son.”

“I´m sorry father, but a friend is in trouble. I have to go, but I think we should do this again.” Putting the rest of his steak in his mouth, Izuku started texting All Might. “*Dad, do you know a hero called Texas Red? They just called me, they said they caught someone who wanted to see me.”* The answer was almost instantaneous “*Of course! He was a good friend when I lived in America! He is an honourable man, so you can trust his word. Did he tell you who it was?”*

“No, but I think I know…”

“Son, don’t worry…we´ll see what we can do when they call. At what time will they contact you?”

“They said the morning, so I guess we can all have breakfast together while we wait.”

“That would be perfect, my boy, I´ll see you and Inko tomorrow”

“Goodnight, All Might”

“Goodnight, hero!”

So, the Americans had Himiko Toga. His only other friend on the other side of the law was Tomura, and he was locked up securely; Himiko had disappeared after All for One´s worldwide broadcast, just before they caught him and Shigaraki killed him. A month after that, Izuku had received a midnight call from an unknown phone, and had heard her voice on the other side, as terrified as when a cement wall had pinned her down during the typhoon in Okinawa.

She had asked him to listen to a gruesome story, she had lost consciousness and woken up a month later, the blood of unknown people on her hands. She had dreamt about some sort of school near a nuclear facility, where some people tied her to a chair and brainwashed her. At the end of the dream, she died in a nuclear explosion.

She repeated over and over that she was sorry for hurting Izuku, she said that her mind was always telling her what to do and she had always thought it was her own thoughts, but it had been programmed by people, bad people.

Izuku had ended up spending the night just talking at his phone, trying to get the villain girl to calm down, telling her happy stories. When he had finally heard soft snoring from the other side of the phone, he tried to sleep.

He was extremely tired, but he was even more confused about his feelings towards the villain than he had been after saving her in the typhoon. They had shared more phone calls throughout the year, sometimes just to chat, at other times when she had psychological breakdowns.

Himiko told him about how she was compelled to kill a list of twenty-five targets, their names and

locations appearing in her nightmares.

She told him about everything she learned about her past from the nightmares, whenever she was lucid in her dreams, she tried gathering as much information as she could about the place that had ruined her mind.

She had to kill her targets herself or risk endangering more lives, she said, mourning every kill when she vented with Izuku.

Three weeks earlier she had stopped calling, so Izuku guessed she would soon be done with it and maybe would turn herself over and get the help she needed. But now, she was a prisoner in America.

Izuku knew he wanted to save the girl, he felt protective of her, he wanted her to be happy and safe. He wanted to talk to her about happy things, to see her smile genuinely. He felt stupid for being attracted to a villain, he knew she had been obsessed, in what was not exactly a healthy way, with him before Okinawa, but after that and after every phone call he had felt real friendship, and a part of him wanted more, he had been ashamed to tell All Might one day.

The retired hero had not known what to tell him about that, but had told Izuku he had his support, always. Izuku had drawn the line on telling his mother about having a crush for a girl who had previously tried to stab him and drink his blood, though.

Arriving home restless, he switched on his tablet and started researching Texas Red, the hero who had called him. A lot of information regarding his hero years was available, but oddly, nothing in the last eight years. The second he found the hero´s Quirk, his Hero Analysis notebook was in his hands, and he scribbled on every detail.

Currently sixty-five years old, Texas Red´s real name was Holden Johns. The cowboy theme had made Izuku think at first of his teacher at UA, Snipe, but their quirks were rather different; Snipe´s quirk allowed him to control the trajectory of his bullets, while Texas Red´s Quirk, Dead Eye, allowed him to slow down his perception of time in order to accurately aim and shoot in what seemed to be inhumanly fast speeds.

A lethal and a tranquiliser rounds revolver were always on his belt, for different kinds of enemies. He had worked closely with All Might and David Shield during All Might´s American years, being a friend and ally to the superhero.

Texas Red had been quite famous on his own as well, taking down the Outlaw Villain: Gunfighter, a cop killer and the mastermind behind multiple bank heists, on a televised duel at high noon. The cowboy hero had been deadly with the big iron on his hip, ending Gunfighter´s spree.

He had also dismantled an entire drug cartel on his own, led the evacuation of a city caught by a gigantic tornado (with no casualties) and had even exposed a spy conspiracy on the high command of the US military.

So, to sum up, a reliable hero, powerful but also deadly when needed, ruthless and implacable, but also known to be a gentleman to all, men, women and children.

Next Izuku researched the possible intelligence agencies Texas Red could be working for; the FBI, CIA, the NSA, maybe another for the State Department or perhaps Military Intelligence.

After a quick read, he pretty much discarded them as options, it had to be something more secretive. Satisfied with his new knowledge, Izuku bookmarked a few sites on American heroes

and turned the tablet off.

He laid down to sleep, graduation was just two days away, and the graduation party a day after that. He was excited to finally graduate as a hero and move on to greater things. Soon he had drifted to sleep, dreaming of dancing with a girl with yellow catlike eyes and a fanged smile.

Chapter End Notes

I hope I wasn´t too harsh on Hisashi Midoriya, maybe in the manga he will appear at some point and show he does care, but at the time of writing, he hasn´t.
The Tartarus escape seems hinted now in the manga, perhaps using Gigantomachia!
Thank you for reading!
(Mei´s Dad being called Blacksmith is in homage to "Soon I shall be Indestructible" by IllMadeKnight, but he has a different backstory)

Interrogation, Breakfast and Graduation

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Agent Anna Dobinek was rather annoyed after the first interrogation of the prisoner, the girl called Himiko Toga. After repeating that she “knew her rights”, demanding her “phone call” and a lawyer, all of which had fell on deaf ears, she had started shouting the lyrics from various songs in Japanese before Anna lost her patience and slammed a fist on the table “Shut the fuck up, prisoner!”.

At her side, the professional hero White Stripe had a hand on his forehead, clearly exasperated himself. He looked up and said, “Who would you even call, Toga?”

Her face had lit up, she had blushed heavily and had said in a sheepish voice “Why my Izu-Izu of course, he is the hero Deku in Japan…I want to hear his voice and then I will tell you stuff!” The prisoner had then smiled, showing her fangs.

“We are done for now, we'll let you be a while” said White Stripe.

“And don’t start singing, girl, your voice is shit” said Anna as they left the interrogation room. She actually thought she was just average, not actually shit, but a bad cop isn’t supposed to compliment singing.

Outside, Texas Red stood behind the one-way mirror window. “I already called the Deku kid, he is sorta my pal All Might´s adopted son. He knew exactly who the girl was, so if we can't use him on good will, we can blackmail him as an accomplice to a serial killer.”

Anna was confused “Use a hero? What exactly is the plan, sir?”

“It’s simple: we end threats to world peace with complete deniability, a high degree of control and, if it goes according to plan, with no collateral damage. The medical tests confirmed most of what her file says, corroborating her Quirk, health condition and, among other things, her age. Since she isn't 21 years old, she can't be tried and convicted like an adult for a few more months, that gives us even more leverage.

"Flight Plan also found her birth certificate and whatever public records were available in Japan's databases. Everything is fake, except an inscription for a boarding school, which she attended for a year, before running away. Somebody made up the girl's past, up until five years ago. Even if this had no use, the curiosity is making me rather happy I took the case.”

Anna could only nod at all the new information. It might make sense, if she could see the whole picture, but she wasn’t particularly keen about it at the moment. She changed the subject “And what about this “Dekoo” person?”

“A rising star in Japan, he tracked and stopped All for One after he escaped last year. His team used deadly force, the bastard deserved it. The whole business was kept quiet by the Japanese and Chinese governments, so the kid isn’t overwhelmingly famous. He has a growing fanbase, apparently moderated by our young prisoner, and they like his selflessness, humility and courage. This Deku will be a good help.”

It was Thursday morning, and All Might had arrived at the Midoriya household early, to help Inko Midoriya prepare breakfast for the three of them. He knocked on the door and was met by a short woman with green hair and a kind smile, that made his heart skip a beat. “Good morning, Toshinori!”

“Good morning, Inko!” they greeted each other. Walking to the kitchen Inko told the retired hero about her week so far, how proud she was of her son, how happy she had been lately.

At the kitchen, they split into their now almost routine positions; Inko would wash vegetables and Toshinori would chop them, they would add them to the wok on the stove, and they would also include different meats and spices for a stir fry.

Inko had told him once that, while katsudon could brighten any day for Izuku, a spicy stir fry could wake him up better than any coffee. Toshinori felt he learned a new thing every time he visited the Midoriyas; Inko was very wise in his eyes, full of interesting ideas.

He had learned quite a bit of cooking; beyond a medium rare steak and a few American breakfast styles, Toshinori had pretty much always cooked body-builder food; tasteless chicken breast, smoked vegetables…a good portion of his hero salary on his early days had been spent in restaurants to avoid losing his mind at the bland food! But on the kitchen with Inko, he felt he could give the Chef Hero Lunch Rush a run for his money.

Absorbed by cooking, All Might didn’t hear protégé, Izuku, come into the kitchen, until he said in a drowsy voice “Hey mom, hey dad, what are you preparing?” Toshinori and Inko exchanged a glance, smiling happily “Spicy stir fry, my boy! To keep you growing strong and MIGHTY!” he said.

The boy nodded and sleepwalked off to the living room, muttering about some American heroes All Might recognised. Young Midoriya had been doing his homework! But how would they explain to Inko the phone call situation? The retired hero had no idea.

When the meal was ready, they gathered in the small table that was their dining room and enjoyed the spicy dish. Izuku indeed woke up, gulping down glass after glass of water.

Inko excused herself after a while, it seemed someone had moved an appointment at work for earlier in the morning and she had been called to see the client and show them the apartments the real estate agency offered. She gave Izuku a hug and Toshinori a warm smile, and left for the train station.

“Son, we don’t know exactly when Texas Red will call, what should we do while we wait?” Izuku had suggested watching a movie Tsuyu had lent him, about some kind of Mexican hero called “Santo”.

“The description says he's a wrestler that fights vampires, it sounds pretty interesting!” Watching it with subs, not dubs, the retired hero and the young man watched a very cheesy movie with incredibly dated special effects, laughing hard at things that may not have been meant for comedy, but had been so absurd they had no choice but to laugh. The main hero had in some way reminded Toshinori of Gran Torino, which only made it funnier.

Eventually, the call came. An unknown number, they answered and set up the speaker phone. “Am I speaking with Izuku Midoriya?” said Texas Red´s voice.

“Yes, All Might is here too.”

“Good, you'll both want to hear this. How you doin', pal? Y'all living well?”

“I am very happy with life, yes, Red. How about you, the kids are alright?”

“Teenagers, man. I think you know what I mean. But we can talk more soon, right now, I need y´all to hear the sales pitch I´m about to throw your way.”

“Alright, sir, we're listening” said Izuku.

The Texan continued “So here´s the deal: your boy's little girlfriend is wanted for three charges of murder. She also killed twenty criminals, villains and terrorists, and I would give her a medal for that if I could, but I can´t. And given her age, we can´t legally execute her...*yet*.”

Izuku´s face turned pale, and his eyes opened in shock. “But she seems agreeable enough if we get her together with you, young Midoriya, so we´ll make a deal; she´ll finish her “list”, the two remaining are pieces of shit anyway, and then she´ll work for us. In exchange for her help on a few situations, we might even let her go. So, can I count on you, Deku? Bringing your little girlfriend to the side of good?”

“Yes, sir. I want to help!”

“We´ll send you some plane tickets, for your mom and All Might too. Your second home has missed you, pal. And before you ask about your graduation, don’t worry. We´ll keep Miss Toga safe and comfortable in the meantime.”

In her basic prison cell, Himiko Toga had been startled by a voice with a noticeable Texan accent coming from a speaker on the wall had started talking. When she heard what he was saying, she started smiling uncontrollably.

My Izu-Izu´s voice. YES. The boy had answered, his voice a bit worried *Did his voice become deeper? I like this.* Then the Texan had called her Izuku´s “little girlfriend” making her blush so much. And then Izu-Izu had said he would make a deal with the government for her! “YES!” she yelled as she threw around her pillow. She was going to see her Izu-Izu soon! And he wanted to make her be good! *He is so perfect!*

The call ended, and Toga was too hyped to sit down, go to sleep or do anything like that! She went up to the door and started banging on it, yelling that she wanted to talk. Eventually, one of the guards opened it to tell her they would see her in a while.

A bit more settled, Toga sat down on the bed, and started singing one of the “Deku Playlist” songs, the theme from one of All Might´s Sunday morning cartoons. Being used to staying quiet for stealth, singing to her heart's content made her happy, even if she admitted her voice was no pop star material.

As Toga sang another song with terrible Engrish, the door opened and in came three people; the guard with the British accent that had agreed to her request for a talk; the hero in a black and white costume, the good cop; and the angry commando woman, the bad cop.

“Hello, Skunkman, Sergeant Bitchface!” she beamed at the interrogators.

Before the male hero could defend his outfit from the comparison, the commando said, “You said you wanted to talk, then talk.”

“I want some information in exchange and a couple requests.”

“Fine” said the Skunkman, and the commando added “But we ask first.”

Toga nodded “Shoot.”

“First question. Do you have valuable information on any villains, criminals or other kinds of enemies to society?”

“The guy I´m supposed to kill uses his company as an arms dealing and drug smuggling operation, I think he wronged All for One some ten years ago. The other guy, the one in South Africa, is a supposed philanthropist, but his group kidnaps children in villages for experiments. I think one of the Nomus Shigaraki had was made with one of those kids…And I have some smaller fish, if it helps. On my backpack there´s a notebook with locations of drug dealers in New York that peddle Trigger and other nasty stuff. I also have some contacts from some gangsters in Italy, their grandmas made great pasta but weren’t too discrete.”

“This is good info, Toga. What is your first question?” asked the Skunkman.

“I have two but only one counts…The one that counts is; can I get the videos of the UA graduation? And the one that doesn’t count is; what do I call you?”

“I´m White Stripe, and my fellow interrogator is Holy Diver. We can tell you more when young Midoriya arrives next week.”

“And if you need those videos, you sick little girl, it´s fine as long as you keep being cooperative. Second question. Where were you trained? Footage of your fights shows a degree of proficiency above common criminal levels.”

“I have no idea, I kinda “remember” the moves when I´m fighting. Maybe I picked it up from Shigaraki´s violent video games, I dunno. So, is there any gossip on my Izu-Izu's class?”

“Not much, though your Deku fan page misses you.”

“Third question. Do you know of any useful information on the villains Ndege Mweusi or Pestilentia?”

“I'm not even gonna try and pronounce the first one's name, that I know. When I was researching the South African guy, I found that his people took over a large chunk of ground to the south and now his missiles can hit South Africa. I don’t know much more, but I don’t think he has anything that could end the world just yet. The other guy, Shigaraki talked about him when we busted All for One out, the guy ignored us. I never heard anything from him while I was in Europe; I don’t even know if Pestilentia is a “he”. But the name sorta seems familiar from somewhere else.”

“So, what do you want to ask?” said the commando, Holy Diver. *She´s a little less bitchy today, maybe I could cooperate a bit more.*

“Can you get me a Japanese newspaper too?”.

A short while later, Toga was reading the Tokyo Times, soaking in the information. It felt nice to read kanji after more than a year reading Latin and Cyrillic alphabets. Japan seemed rather peaceful, no new threats as big as the League around to cause havoc. On business news, the

Singaporean guy´s company was still ridiculously successful.

The paper had a socials section a bit too small for her crave, but it was still news; rumours of a wedding between Eraserhead and Ms. Joke, some paparazzi photos of Todoroki and Yaomomo looking, frankly, very sappy together. *At least they aren't after my Izu-Izu, good.*

Another piece of good news; apparently Tokoyami and Tsuyu had confirmed their relationship on social media prior to their prom. *Another one less!* Sadly, there were no news about the rest, and she only found Mei Hatsume in the business section, on an interview about engineering. Boring stuff, really. *Then again, he is coming to see me soon!*

Mei Hatsume was bored out of her mind. The ceremony was almost an hour away but her dad, the retired hero Blacksmith, and her mom, the well-known surgeon Motoko Hatsume, had already brought her to UA to wait. That had meant getting up early, not for a project, but to get dressed up! It was ridiculous.

With Momo Yaoyorozu´s help she had picked a bright blue Hakama with orange details, which was layered over her newest Babies; a skeletonized, articulated exoskeleton that supported her back, arms and legs while using thruster gloves and boots, which reduced in size to bracelets and shoes on command.

The exo had the added benefit of minimizing lower back pain, which had been a constant since puberty. She had made a spinal support for Yaoyorozu as well, as she guessed she might experience similar issues herself.

She spotted a clearly distracted Izuku Midoriya arriving with his friendly rival Katsuki Bakugou and their parents. Bakugou wasn't fond of Mei, for some reason.

Then again, quite a few weren't overly fond of her; Iida for that Sports Festival fight, Uraraka for some reason…she had no time to ponder that, her pal Izuku was on a jumping distance with the new rocket boots!

"Hey Mid!" she said as she landed just a bit too close to the green haired hero "You ready? And did you see the new Baby? I broke half my garage with the first flight! The boots and stabilizers combined, and you can fly jet-pack height!"

Midoriya was instantly interested, watching as Mei showed off the gauntlets and boots, and how they shrank in size to fit under her dress, and said "Is that the folding metal you told me the other time? And is that exo based on a human spine?"

"Yes and yes, my dude!". Soon the technobabble was too much for the nearby Bakugou, who was telling them to fuck off and die. He could be such a sweetheart these days.

"Anyway Mei, do you think we could do some improvements to the suit on the weekend? I'm going with All Might to America for a while and I don't know when I will be returning, so it needs to be ready for anything. And there's no one I trust more with my equipment!"

Oh, is that right? More than that Melissa, eh? Oh you know how to treat an engineer, mate! Not that I´m jealous or anything! "Sure thing, pal, see you in the garage?"

"Sure. Not too early, because you sleep late, right?"

“You got it, Mid”. The nickname saved her almost half a second every time she used it, and using time wisely is everything!

The rest of the generation started arriving then, first individually and then by groups, until everyone was there. She was baffled by Tokoyami having completely normal parents, amazed by the invisible Hagakures in fancy clothes, not surprised at all to see the plant-hair girl´s parents being as conservative as her, awed by how elegant some had dressed, students and parents alike.

Even Midoriya´s teacher was presentable, his long hair tied neatly behind his head and his stubble shaved. And he looked proud and happy, with Ms. Joke on his arm as he actually laughed for once at her bad jokes and whatever Present Mic had said.

All Might in his now-permanent lanky form approached Midoriya, and as he left, he said with a warm smile “Oh, and I really liked your dress, Mei, it looks great on you!” Mei blushed a bit as he thanked him.

She tried to take her mind off of thinking about Izuku as anything other than a friend by joining the rest of their team, the “First Response” team, comprised of Midoriya, Tsuyu, Todoroki, Yaoyorozu, Iida, Uraraka and herself.

The team up idea had been Midoriya's, forming at first a duo with Tsuyu, Emerald Green Rescue. Then the rest of his best friends had joined, so the green theme had to change. Yaoyorozu and Mei had been added after a while, to better improve their equipment. The amount of ideas Mei had in that environment was simply staggering, and it was the best place to start Hatsume Industries for real.

The name had been changed to the current after the League of Villains had released All for One from Tartarus, as they had been among the heroes that had been in time to answer the distress call, their base, a garage in one of Yaoyorozu´s family´s warehouses, being just twenty minutes away, if you had a supersonic VTOL jet, which they had just recently made.

The other heroes on site had been Endeavor's team with a helicopter, Eraserhead and Shinsou, who were on patrol nearby, and Bakugou, who had taken his new motorcycle for a spin. Which reminded her she needed to clean the soda stains on the *Mei.*

The ceremony finally began, with speech after speech. And then it was her turn! Luckily, she had her notes written! She approached the podium and began her short speech “My fellow support students, engineers, we are crafting the future! Let’s help these heroes keep our society safe, make this safe society better, and advance science! The world is counting on us, so let’s go beyond the expectations! Plus Ultra!”

There were cheers, even from the students who considered her obnoxious. It felt good to have moments of glory like this, oh yes. “And remember, Hatsume Industries has something for every hero!” she cackled maniacally as she powered her jet boots and stabilizers, landing on her seat.

“Anyway, here's young Shinsou, who transferred from General Studies to the Hero Course!” said All Might, the master of ceremonies for the event.

Izuku, All Might and Inko Midoriya had arrived at the airport with time to spare. Two flights were ahead of them, to Los Angeles and then to Florida, where Texas Red´s Agency would pick them up

and get them to their base.

Izuku thought back to the prom party. Uraraka had decided not to ask him to go as her partner, to the surprise of some who didn't know them too well, and had gone with Iida instead, Izuku had ended up asking Mei as his date, but she had given a lot of emphasis to the fact that they would go just as friends.

Maybe she was trying to convince herself. It had been quite fun to go to a school dance, without the pressure of it being a "real date", if that had been the case he might have been a lot more nervous. He had been happy to see Uraraka and Iida having fun together, maybe they would never had spent that time alone otherwise.

Mei had left for a while after her exoskeleton Baby had torn an arm in her dress while doing a programmed dance, that had stunned the whole dancefloor. "It seems the dance algorithm needs refinement!" she had said after going for a change of clothes.

But being date-less on the event had made him think of Toga again, and if she could ever go to an event like that. A very bizarre image had shaken the thoughts away, as Mineta had arrived with an actual, living girl as his date; a fangirl it seemed.

The girls had then banded together, which had given him time to talk with Shouto Todoroki, about their plans after school. Shouto was planning a long trip with Momo in Europe but after that he wasn't sure.

Heroes could get more specialized education after graduation, but it was completely optional, and in some cases was little more than an internship, which they had already had. Izuku explained his visit to America would probably be the same; Texas Red could surely give him something for his resume besides everything else.

In the end, Izuku and Mei had ended up having to take care of a very drunk Ojiro and Hagakure, who had drunk a lot of the "punch" Monoma had passed around to liven up the party. The two drunken teens had cried, then told each other how much they loved the other, and then cried again, sad that they would lose contact with friends. Reassuring them, Izuku had patted them on the back, given them a shoulder to cry on, and had leapt aside with Full Cowl when Hagakure had almost puked on him.

Eventually, they had walked them home to Hagakure´s house, which was only a train stop away. Izuku had laid them on a couch with bottles of sports drinks for when they woke up, and buckets should they vomit again. Apologizing to the elder Hagakures again, they left. Izuku had offered to walk Mei home, but after a nervous laugh, she had said it was too "date-y" and had rocketed away on her jet boots.

The day after, in the "First Response" garage, he had found some of his teammates quite hungover, victims of Monoma´s punch, and had made them some breakfast.

Tokoyami, who had crashed in a couch with Tsuyu, had even bowed and called him "a saviour in my darkest hour of need, an Orpheus retrieving this wretch from the abyss" after the food had made his nausea subside.

Arriving late and lethargic, with a robot arm feeding her an energy drink, Mei nodded in his direction. She was not a morning person, and niceties would always depend on the time of day with her. Izuku handed her the briefcase containing his hero costume and let her do a routine checkout

on her own time. She would call him for the improvements when needed. So, to pass the time he sparred with Todoroki, exercise would help the son of Endeavor sweat out whatever alcohol remained in his system.

Martial arts without using quirks, they fought for a while, mostly just horsing around and throwing punches and kicks. A few minutes in, Tsuyu and Momo joined. They looked much better after having had breakfast too. The intercom blared with Hatsume´s voice, energetic again “Mid, get in here, its UPGRADE TIME!”

The garage was divided in four parts; the actual garage, housing their VTOL craft, the *Mei*, a few other vehicle prototypes and an all-terrain pickup truck Tsuyu had acquired second-hand, their first car; another had a living area, kitchen and some beds in a male room and a female room; another was a planning and operations room; and the last part was the workshop.

Mei had painstakingly reproduced every machine available in UA´s workshop with Momo´s help, and then had researched new tech and added it too. The walls were covered in Hatsume Industries banners and posters, with a few posters featuring other geniuses too. And dominating the entire room, a sign saying, “Accident free workplace for 05 days”. They had not used the double digits yet.

Izuku entered the workshop to the familiar scents of oils, lubricants, fire, molten metal, and Hatsume´s perfume. Thankfully, he didn’t smell the overpowering sulphur of another explosion; Mei was just doing routine checks, but with her Babies combustion was always a possibility.

Mei didn’t look up from her work, and just said “The suit´s in perfect condition, what changes should we make?” The suit had changed quite a bit since the design Izuku and his mother had made; the stronger material, the gloves and kneepads, the extensions for Shoot Style, some more strategic armouring Mei had suggested throughout their school years. It was still the same look, though, and still kept his “bunny ears” even if he never wore the hood. Maybe someday he would need it for rain or something.

“I´m seeing All Might´s friend in Florida, maybe we could make the suit more breathable in some areas? And maybe use that tech you used on the jet boots to make the up-armoured plates a bit less cumbersome?”

“Good ideas, pal. How about a retractable emergency helmet? I also thought about adding a layer of a new weave I made with Yaomomo the other day. Here, feel this.”

She passed him a length of black cloth. It was flexible but strong and was rather light as well. “Now look at this!” she said, snatching the cloth and stabbing it with one of her cutting tools. The cloth held. “It dampens damage and holds its integrity remarkably well. If we weave this it will make you very, very resistant.”

“Sounds good. Can I help with anything?”

“Just bring me some of that breakfast please, Mid, my stomach will feel weird in a while if all I´ve had is energy drinks.”

“Sure, one breakfast coming up, master craftswoman!”

“You are a lifesaver, mate. Never change!”

Mei had called Momo at noon, and Todoroki had joined Midoriya in bringing the girls their afternoon meal. At 6 P.M., Mei had called him again, the suit was ready. It was light, protective

and allowed great freedom of movement.

The plane was ready, and Izuku boarded with his family. His carry-on had his suit, just in case. He put on his headphones, and listened to his playlist, the one he had shared in an interview for a teen magazine. Soon he had fallen asleep and the long flight passed quickly. Landing on L.A., they had some time to stretch their legs and eat before boarding the next flight.

Chapter End Notes

This is not the last time we´ll see that prom night, some other interesting things also happened and will be seen in a future chapter!
Thanks for reading!

Meeting

Agent Anna Dobinek held up a sign with the Japanese kanji that supposedly read “Midoriya Family”. Next to her was the Pro Hero White Stripe, a man in his late thirties with a muscular build, as expected in a pro hero, with a section of his black hair coloured white. In his civilian clothes he barely stood out.

Texas Red had partnered her with the hero for the whole Himiko Toga situation, while using her team and Flight Plan´s crew as staff and security. White Stripe was a very agreeable person, knowledgeable on a variety of topics and effective as a hero, so Anna was comfortable working with him. And the fact that his hero name was also a musical reference had started a certain understanding between them.

Their guys were there; the unmistakeable form of All Might after losing his power, a short woman, who had the easy confidence of someone who had recently found the motivation to better herself, and a young man with an athlete´s physique and medium height. His walk was confident, the stride of a person who had stared death in the eye and survived.

Most heroes Anna had met, the disappointing ones, didn’t walk like that. The short woman noticed the sign and pointed, and the trio rushed to the agents. “Midoriyas and Mr. Yagi, welcome to Florida.”

Anna took the wheel of their dark blue sedan, driving to the outskirts of Orlando. On the backseat, both Midoriyas were ecstatic about visiting the famous amusement parks later, as a family. They drove the mother to the hotel the Agency had booked for them, a rather nice tourist hotel, and then drove both males to their destination.

They made it without issue to the base, a rundown strip mall, with a second-rate coffee shop, a used books store, a mattress store and a shop selling phone accessories.

Anna took them to the administration offices, which had a hidden door to a basement, containing a state-of-the-art operations centre, interrogation room and holding cells. The base extended underground well beyond the strip mall.

Led to Texas Red´s office, All Might and Izuku Midoriya met the deputy director. Texas Red grabbed All Might in a bear hug, saying “Man, it’s been too long!”.

Midoriya extended his hand and introduced himself politely, in perfect English. Texas Red just bear hugged him too. “You are pretty much family, son. Now take a seat, please, and let me explain everything.” Texas Red sat down on his leather chair and motioned to the seats in front of his oak desk.

“We are all with the Quirk Intelligence and Intervention Agency, or the Agency for short. I´m Holden Johns, Deputy Director. We handle Quirk related threats, foreign and domestic. The people who picked you up are heroes with the agency, White Stripe and Holy Diver. We also have two liaison officers, with the CIA and MI6 on the team. The project is pretty simple; we take a dangerous criminal off the streets and throw her at our enemies.”

“Sir, is this some kind of suicide squad?”

“Only if the criminals die, son. And this is just the pilot test, so I am hoping for survival. Here´s how it will work; I want you, as Deku, to be Himiko Toga´s handler, and eliminate the target. She

has some targets of her own, we have concluded as some sort of “programming” done to her during her childhood.

"They are not good people, so we will allow that. After that, we want you two to hunt down Pestilentia. You know his reputation. We can legally wash Miss Toga´s hands from the blood and get her the help she very much needs. We are basically asking for you two to do our dirty work and buy her life back.”

The young Midoriya had a determined look on his eyes “I do not agree with killing, and if possible will arrest Pestilentia, but if this is the price for Himiko´s life, I will do it. Can I see her?”

“Well, son, glad to have you on board. Sure, but keep it PG, the camera operators are not voyeurs.” The slightly blushing teen followed Anna to Toga´s cell, guarded by a bored looking Anderson, who sniffed the air, intrigued at a new visitor.

Himiko Toga was trying to sleep, turning in her bed. It was no fun being in a cell and sleeping helped sometimes. She had had very few nightmares so far while imprisoned, so it was a worthwhile pursuit. Either that or exercising. She had read and re-read the newspaper she had been given, obsessed about the video on the UA graduation for hours on end, but finally she had been left with nothing else to do.

Then the doorknob on her door started turning. Instantly awake, she focused on the entrance, sitting up. She wasn’t in the mood for an interrogation right now, so she might as well not cooperate this time.

Sergeant Bitchface, also known as Holy Diver, entered first. Toga expected Skunkman to come after, but she was in for a surprise. Her jaw dropped open and tears flowed freely from her eyes. *He´s here! HE´S HERE!*

Without thinking, she ran up to Izuku and tangled him in a hug. To her relief, he hugged her back. “Its alright, I am here.” he said. He held her for a long time, and Toga felt safe, secure, *home.*

She finally separated, and asked “What is going on, Izu-Izu?”. Izuku explained what the agents had told him, how they could give her her own life if she killed for them. *It’s a sweet deal, I´ll give em that. Too bad the catch is they want me to kill a goddamn ghost.*

“But why are you agreeing to helping me kill someone for them? You are a hero, you said heroes don’t kill.”

He looked her in the eye, *even his eyes are so confident now,* and said “I agreed because I want to help you. And I can’t get you the help you need if you are condemned to a life sentence. I don’t want to kill anyone, and if possible, I want to arrest that villain.”

“But why do you want to help me? I am not a…I am not a good person. I don’t deserve saving.” She sobbed.

“Shh…Don’t say that.” He softly grabbed her chin and brought her face up to look at him again “A hero helps people, even when they don’t want help. I know there is good in you, and I want to see that!” *His smile is going to kill me. Not if you kill him first. Never! I will keep him safe, from me most of all.*

Toga had cried a lot more, and Izuku had held her close, comforting her. Eventually, she had been too exhausted, and Izuku had carried her to the bed and tucked her in. She grabbed his hand with the strength she had left before falling asleep. Izuku held it for a long time, before the agents escorted him out of the cell.

The drive back to the hotel was much happier, in Izuku´s mind. Himiko was safe, and even if he didn't agree with the plan the government had in mind, he couldn't bear the thought of Toga being convicted of murder and executed. If it was going to be to kill or be killed, then so be it, he knew she had good in her.

He was still processing the American team the Agency had set to guard Toga. White Stripe was pretty famous; the youthful, easy going hero with a simple strength enhancer Quirk had quickly grown on him. Holy Diver and her team seemed capable and ruthless, government agents through and through, not actual heroes. The CIA attaché, Flight Plan, seemed a good spy and if he hadn't known, Izuku would have guessed he was in charge. He hadn't disclosed his Quirk yet, but Izuku planned to ask him next time he saw him.

"Miss Holy Diver, may I know your Quirk?" he asked their driver, to pass the time before getting to the hotel.

"Sure kid: I´ve got some night vision, and I can hear underwater. Both are great for spec ops."

"Ah, so it's a hybrid Quirk, like my friend Todoroki´s! That´s awesome!"

"But write that in the hotel, the light of sunset isn't good for writing, and I don't want teens hurting their vision on my account." Izuku felt the agent was stern but ultimately a good person.

At the hotel, Izuku was given another key, for his own room. He was thankful, it would have been awkward. Holy Diver told him before leaving "We´ll pick you up at 9, be ready. You're starting some training tomorrow. Don't worry about not going to the parks with your family, when this whole thing is done you'll get some tickets. Oh, and this may be obvious, but no word of the operation leaves your mouth, understand? OPSEC."

Izuku changed into his pijamas, a shirt that said shirt and his boxers, and threw himself on the bed. He was out right away.

Toga woke up with a start. Her Izu-Izu had been beside her, so her sleep had been mostly peaceful. She half-remembered a few dreams, mostly innocuous, meaningless stuff; eating a chocolate ice cream, seeing a camel jump through hoops, some blurry outlines doing tricks with some plates. But the last dream had been another nightmare, just as bad as the ones before her capture. It had begun innocently enough, with her walking along a non-descript street, in a foggy morning light.

Then she had felt compelled to look at a dark glass window. Her reflection was…distorted, something was off. The image wore her old schoolgirl outfit, the one she had used at first with the League of Villains.

But the strange thing about the reflection was its face: instead of the usual smile Toga favoured, was a completely neutral expression, the mouth a horizontal line. And the eyes, instead of her golden, catlike eyes, were empty, blank. And beside her was a silhouette, the man she saw in the

worst nightmares, the ones where they brainwashed her, standing beside All for One. She couldn't see the person´s face, and his clothes were obscured in fog.

The stranger spoke to her reflection, and Toga could hear the words just beside her "Do not forget who you are. You cannot escape."

The Toga in the glass stared deep into her eyes, and leapt, breaking the window. She slashed at Toga, just narrowly missing. Toga was unarmed, while her double had her old knife and blood-collection syringes. The dream´s fog had invaded her body and she felt sluggish, and every movement was painfully slow.

The double had danced around her attempts at defending herself. The fight felt real, too real for a dream, every slash hurt. Toga felt desperate; was this still a dream? She panicked and tried to run, but the ground had broken, and she tripped. Her double was on top of her, stabbing, stabbing, stabbing…

Then she was looking at everything from above. Toga felt light and airy. Below her, the double kept stabbing the body she seemed to have left. *Is this how it feels after death?* The double then moved away, revealing the body she had been hunched over. The body was not that of a short-ish teenager with messy blonde hair. The body belonged to Izuku Midoriya.

Agent Anna Dobinek heard the prisoner screaming from outside the door when she had come to check up on Anderson, her guard for the third shift. "Whoa, someone had a nightmare" said Anderson, adjusting her hearing aid to safer levels for her delicate eardrums. "Whatever I may say, she´s got strong lungs!".

Anna nodded in response, and said "Should we check on her?"

"Wouldn't hurt to do that." Anna opened the door and closed it behind her.

The prisoner was weeping holding her pillow, hugging it against her chest. She sobbed "Izu-Izu" softly and muttered something in Japanese that Anna couldn't understand.

"You okay, there?" she asked, trying to give her question a kind tone.

"Is Izuku safe? Did I do anything?" the girl looked seriously affected.

"Yeah, he is in his hotel. You are training with him at 9.30. We asked him to leave to let you sleep. It is 3.30 A.M. right now."

The relief on Toga´s face was palpable. She murmured something else in Japanese, maybe some kind of prayer? Then she said "Can I get some sleeping pills or something? I don't want to dream…"

"Sure, but we´re waking you up on time, you are training, no buts." The girl nodded and tried to get her bed in order. Anderson passed her some sleeping pills and a glass of water, and then both agents left the room.

"It is Garza´s turn in fifteen, then you get some shuteye, Anderson." Anna left her subordinate to the boring duty of guarding a sleeping prisoner. Her squad was eager to move on to the next task, being prison guards was a waste of their talents, however dangerous their prisoner might be.

Her bunk on the base was cosy and rather nicely furnished. She might have wanted one with

windows, but it was by far among the best accommodations the Agency had provided her. A rack with her combat gear, a cabinet for her weapons, an actual living room and a well-stocked kitchen…much better than the van´s backseat and MRE´s.

Her sleep cycle had been altered by her night vision since her early childhood into a series of naps throughout the day, so she wasn't particularly tired. She could do something while waiting for the three and a half hours she slept most days at these hours.

Anna grabbed her tablet and added some new data to her own casefile on Himiko Toga. Her psychological knowledge, acquired at an Agency course for Intelligence gathering, wasn't enough to diagnose the teenager with any mental disease, but she clearly had some issues, as did Izuku Midoriya.

But she wasn't updating that file yet, so she turned back to Toga. She had genuine concern for her green haired acquaintance, despite her history showing quite a few fights between her and Midoriya's classmates, and one of the first things she had told the hero had been she wanted to "see him bleed".

Some of the signs of post-traumatic stress were there, but her documented history started at age thirteen, along with what she could remember, apparently, so they couldn't zero in on anything useful.

Her psych evaluation had shown obsessive, anti-social and destructive tendencies on her responses to certain stimuli, but completely opposite response at other times. Perhaps she had some sort of personality disorder?

Anna had little way of exploiting the complex psychiatric information, so instead she would focus on what truly made her tick; the nightmares, Izuku Midoriya, and All for One. Despite her record of being a member of the League of Villains, a very visible group All for One had used in Japan as a "successor", the girl had complete hatred in her face every time she mentioned the supervillain.

The nightmares, she would never openly discuss, but at least some had to do with the Midoriya kid. The kid, who was a pretty good leverage for the Agency on Toga. They could twist her arm with the hero, and she would do the impossible. At least it seemed that way for Anna.

Anna added a new category, combat. On the compatibility training they had planned, she could judge how well the prisoner girl did when not stunned by a flashbang and rushed by four field agents.

Her notes on the new nightmare completed, Anna opened up the Pestilentia file. She was glad to be on that shit stain´s trail. The current number two on the most wanted list, Pestilentia operated a shadow network of drug cartels, weapons smugglers, armed gangs and groups of mercenaries and hitmen.

His hand softly moved the strings of operations in South America, the Middle East, Africa and Europe. The only reason he wasn't the top wanted man in the world, was that he didn't have an actual country, which made Ndege Mweusi the number one. Anna felt the phantom threat Pestilentia posed was greater than a warlord, no matter how many tanks, planes and missiles Ndege Mweusi had.

They had a few leads on the shadow mastermind; some weapons found in a favela in Brazil; a crate of drugs in Afghanistan; a terrorist plot uncovered in Paris by two heroes, themed after a cat and a ladybug; the tenth most wanted villain dead with mysterious symbols on a note fixed to the rope he had been hanged from.

Pestilentia flexing on a competitor, it seemed. Getting Toga to off the bastard was a stroke of genius, thought Anna. The power vacuum it would cause could be useful in further weakening international crime, perhaps by breaking it apart and allowing the countries affected to mop up whatever successors lived.

And if it worked they might even give Toga a bit of a gift. Anna didn't think of herself as a particularly moral or ethical person, in the shades of grey her work took place in. Sometimes they had to do questionable things in order to protect the innocents. She didn't particularly believe in redeeming Toga, as the Midoriya boy seemed to think, rather in having her outweigh the bad she had done by damaging worse people.

Her attention turned to the new intelligence field agents relayed in real time from observation teams around the world, in a continuous feed that analysts turned into briefings and files.

A good portion of the Agency was concentrated in the war on Africa. *NM now holds Namibia, Botswana and is advancing on the South African border. His conscripts stormed Central African Republic positions. Quirkless death squads raid every village inside NM territory. Another resistance group just went dark.*

DEVGRU teams engaged in South Sudan, Marine Corps advance on Cameroon, meet heavy resistance but push on. Armoured divisions and close air support engaged.

It was the biggest war since the advent of Quirks, and for once, US intervention wasn't completely reviled. Smaller scale conflicts also occupied the Army in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, but not full-scale war, like in Africa. In China, a private military company, one of the biggest in Asia, had gone rogue and declared their own state; the government were fighting them, but a few smaller groups had bolstered the first mercs, escalating the conflict even further.

Anna looked at her watch, a smart watch used by the agency for field work, and was surprised by the time. *Almost 5 a.m.* Time to hit the hay.

Training day: the Killhouse

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku Midoriya woke up with good time and in a good mood, showered and dressed in his workout gear. His hero suit in a backpack, he met All Might and his mom in the hotel´s restaurant, a large buffette style eating area. After eating a healthy breakfast, somewhat larger than usual as he didn't know how intense this "training" would be, the young hero said his goodbyes and met the agents at the hotel´s lobby.

The hero White Stripe wore a New York Giants baseball cap, a maroon letterman jacket and sweatpants, and looked particularly happy this morning, perhaps he too wanted to stretch his legs a bit. The agent Holy Diver was dressed in a Polish national football team jacket from back in the Quirkless days, black leggings and lightweight workout shoes, her dark brown hair was tied in an elaborate braid, and she had sleek sunglasses on, the type armed forces personnel used.

The shades didn't hide the scars under her right eye, though. "Good to see you, kid!" greeted the male hero "We are taking you to the gym now."

The ride on the dark sedan took them outside of town to a series of large warehouses and a dusty airstrip. They parked outside one of the warehouses, marked with the letter "G".

The door, a large corrugated one, slid open, revealing an open space containing a football pitch, a few machines and a great set of weights, some climbing ropes and other equipment, and a type of house mock-up Izuku guessed could be used to train soldiers to fight in close spaces.

A team of five people approached them, with Toga in tow. Holy Diver introduced them: the big man with the extra fingers was Csaba, the stocky woman with grey hair, polarized goggles and hearing aids was Anderson, the British man with a regal moustache was Talbot, who was their Quirkless MI6 contact, Garza, a jolly, heavy set man with a rather useless Cilantro-making Quirk, and finally, Isaacs, a lanky man with a polar bear´s head.

Toga looked up at the newcomers and rushed them, grabbing Izuku in a hug. Izuku felt the agent´s hands approach their holstered handguns with the sudden movement. He returned the embrace.

Toga separated from him and asked, "Do you like my outfit? The agents bought it for me." Izuku quickly checked, he hadn't looked at her closely since they had last seen each other. Toga had grown a bit, perhaps an inch this past year, her hair was longer, and a bit better kept, currently tied up in a ponytail instead of her usual style. She was wearing dark blue leggings and a light green tank top, and on her ankle was some kind of device. "Yeah, it suits you. I like the ponytail too!"

"You look handsome, Izu-Izu." she said, blushing and smiling like the "old times".

"You can talk when we are finished. We´re testing you on speed, strength and endurance individually, and then you will pair up for an exercise after that. The squad will tell you what to do in every station." told them Holy Diver.

What followed were two hours of different exercises designed to test their abilities and gauge their power. Izuku could steadily control 50% of One for All in Full Cowl, stretching it to 65% with some strain. The tests still pushed him to the limit.

He was amazed to see how much Toga kept up with him in speed and technique, even if the

strength advantage of his inherited quirk left her far behind.

After having to snap his concentration once more from watching the girl´s thighs as she performed a long jump, Izuku thought to himself how bizarre everything seemed to be. He was training for a special operation to take down the second most dangerous villain in the world, with a girl who had tried to kill him in the past, and he found her very attractive. What next, World War 2 Germans helping fight three many-thousand-year old vampires? It was weird.

Next up, he had sparred against White Stripe. The pro hero had some twelve years of combat experience, a strength enhancer Quirk that worked similar to One for All, and some pretty good reflexes, but Izuku had already gone toe to toe with All for One twice and lived, so he was no scrub.

In the last practice match, Izuku, now familiar with White Stripe´s moves, had used every punch, kick and throw against him and beaten the pro hero handily. White Stripe had been very happy since that fight; worthy adversaries were always a source of improvement.

Finally, Holy Diver had given them some security goggles, some padded vests and directed them to the mock-up house "Final exercise, the Killhouse. You have ten minutes to prepare, then we come and get you. Get hit on the vitals and you are down."

Izuku and Toga walked all over the house quickly to find a spot to hold, Izuku´s mind instantly going into analysis mode. He knew their Quirks: night vision and underwater hearing, extra digits in hands and toes, super smell, Quirkless, Cilantro-making and bear head.

They found a room on the second floor wide enough to use a Full Cowl finger snap to scatter the operators, and Izuku said his plan "I´ll use my snaps to send them flying, then we finish them off, you take the ones on the left, Himiko. If we close in quickly they won't have the time or distance to fire their guns." Toga grinned; she liked the plan.

The ten minutes were up. Four explosions around the house sounded. *Breaching charges.* Then another explosion soon after. Izuku heard a faint Velcro sound beneath them, and then the ground collapsed in an explosion.

Adrenalin made the world go slower. Izuku grabbed Himiko from the collapsing floor, sending a finger snap against the hole the charge had made. He saw two masked operators hit by the snap, one flew over, the other dug into the ground with his boots and shot at them. The small paint pellets of the training shotgun flew just by Izuku´s head, missing by millimetres.

Both defenders landed in what was left of the room, just as the door was kicked down. A small metallic canister rolled in and exploded, with a deafening sound and a blinding light. Toga had closed her eyes in anticipation, and even deafened, she had closed in with the attacker, getting in close and disarming them.

Below, the operators were gone before Izuku could attack again. A second commando came into the room, and Izuku engaged them, smashing the paintball gun with a Full Cowl punch and taking them down with a hip throw. Beside him, Toga had disarmed the operator and shot them with their own paintball gun. One of the remaining operators shot at them from the corridor, in counterattack, Izuku sent another Air Force snap their way.

The duo tried to manoeuvre away from the corridor, moving to cover while the other team member supressed the enemy with paintballs or wind shockwaves. The enemy operator was relentless and kept their heads down with accurate fire. They were backed down to the end of the corridor, a door to either side and a large window behind. "Let's go left!" said Toga, kicking down the plywood

door.

But before they could step inside, one of the operators swung on a rope through the window, shattering it, and firing two well aimed shots at the defenders, hitting centre mass. Toga held up her hands in the air in surrender, Izuku sighed in resignation and imitated her.

The “living” operators approached them; their “killer” Holy Diver and the one who had almost got them in the corridor, the Quirkless Talbot. “So, you learned from when we caught you, eh, girl? Not bad, most special forces teams we have worked with couldn’t even survive a single breach, and you two made it for three minutes and twelve seconds. You even took out two of the team, not bad at all.”

She even smiled at them. “Tomorrow all six of us will try the same, the house layout will change. Then we´re adding Flight Plan´s lads. When we´re satisfied with you, we´re going for the Singaporean.”

They gave Izuku and Toga some time after to rest. Immediately Toga showered the young Midoriya with questions, mostly gossip related “Are Kirishima and Bakugou married yet? Did Ochako ask you out in the end? Did you Detroit Smash her? Will Hatsume and the American girl have a mech-suit duel for the right to make your stuff? Do you like my hair? I stole some great shampoo in an apartment…”

“Uhhh…which one do you want me to answer first? Kacchan and Kirishima aren’t married yet, we are all too young to marry. I don’t think Ochako ever liked me, she didn’t ask me to the prom; I went with Mei” catching himself, he quickly clarified “Just as friends, though! And yes, she is making all my gear, Melissa Shield was too busy with work to join my hero team. And yeah, you look nice…the hair, I mean”

Toga shoved her head in his face in what Izuku guessed was her way to show off “And it smells nice too.” When she separated, Toga's face was red, and she had a big smile. “Tell me all about the prom, I´m so curious!”.

In the gym´s security room, Anna Dobinek´s squad looked at the two teenagers through the camera feed.

“They are so cute together.” said Csaba, the big man was just as big a softy.

“They smell of attraction pheromones, its quite obvious” added Anderson with a small smirk.

“All Might should have told his boy not to put his dick in crazy, but they got some chemistry, I’ll give ´em that” said Anna to the team´s topic. Talbot just laughed.

In the monitor, the young Midoriya was giving quite a vivid tale of a drunken party and the villain girl seemed to be having the time of her life. “I almost like the brat when she´s like this” she told her team.

“As long as she doesn’t yell in the middle of the night that she “keeps her ideals” or “sono chi no sadame, JoJo!” I agree” replied Anderson.

Mei Hatsume decided to take a break from calibrating her latest project, an adaptive armour plate, that she was still trying to figure a use for. *Perhaps on the Mei, or maybe a power suit, maybe*

Yaomomo can make it around her to defend from attacks, hmm. The plate was quite strong and not very heavy. *I´ll think on it later.* "Midoriya! My dude! I want your opinion on something!"

"He´s on his trip in America!" replied Tsuyu from the couch on the living room she was presently sharing with Tokoyami. *Oh yes, how did I forget that?* "Do you two have an idea for what to use this armour plate on?"

"Just let us watch the movie, Hatsume, Santo is about to kick the Guanajuato mummies´ ass!" replied Tsuyu. Her new interest in weird old movies had come out of left field for Mei.

"The caped luchador faces utter doom, inventor of things! Disturbance darkens the unbearable gloom!" added the dramatic bird-head.

Mei left the couple to their old-timey movie, looking for Iida or Uraraka. Todoroki and Yaoyorozu were probably abroad as well, Mei remembered one of them saying something about that. She found the gravity girl opening the garage door for the fast guy, who was carrying some groceries.

Mei immediately was in their faces, asking them about what to do with the plate. They looked at each other, a bit annoyed it seemed, and in the end, none had a good idea for the plate. She walked back to the workshop and dropped the plate in the "half-made ideas" bin.

When Izuku gets here he´ll have good ideas for some of this poor excuse of Babies. She clicked on her phone, checking social media for some good memes to distract her long enough to get some more inspiration.

As she scrolled by, she found out Todoroki indeed was in Europe, and had posted an album of photos of himself and Yaomomo skiing on the Swiss Alps. *Always gotta be fancy, eh?*

Scroll, scroll, some ironic memes, scroll, scroll, some of her Hatsume Industries ads, scroll, All Might in Florida with Midoriya´s mom, scroll…wait what? All Might´s skinny form having a blast in the famous Mouse´s theme parks? With her friend´s mom?

Nice, Dadmight took them on vacation! Wait a minute! A helmet! Mei grabbed the armour plate, fixed it on one of the machines, and started giving it shape. A full-head helmet with a face opening, *I´ll make a faceplate later with a Heads-Up Display,* that fit her head perfectly. She picked up a sledgehammer they used for workouts and smashed the new helmet with all her strength. Not a single dent appeared.

Maybe some sort of polymer to absorb the shock? She felt inspired. She looked around for various materials, circuitry and some paints to finish up the helmet. A new Baby was about to be born!

The recently graduated hero Ground Zero walked out from the hero agency he had joined, the current number 1 hero´s.

Endeavor´s headquarters were orderly, well-built and a bit lifeless, by Katsuki Bakugou´s opinion. He kind of expected a bit more expression of anger or pride or something in the decoration, from Endeavor´s reputation, but it was kinda normal.

While Kirishima had stayed with the pro Hero Fatgum after graduating, becoming a full-time sidekick, Bakugou had chosen Endeavor, to see who was in the way of the number 1 spot.

Currently, Bakugou was number 25 on the ratings, one above Todoroki and still a few ahead of Deku, though his fan club was growing every day, administered by some crazy girl on the internet.

The weird air guy from the provisional license exam was the current tenth best, the Dragon Hero Ryukyu overtaking that creepy-ass washing machine as number 8, the old samurai geezer staying in place and the rest of the chart pretty much staying in place.

Next November, though, shit was getting real. Bakugou knew he had many more fans than some of the top ten! He wasn't that much of an asshole anymore, he was now a bad boy! At least Kirishima said that…

And his Quirk was damn strong! He had taken down All for One with a little help from Deku and the creepy-ass hand guy from the League of Villains! Though that was off the record…

Anyway, it was patrol time now. After the whole Tartarus shitstorm, when that fuckhead "Dabi" had blown up his vintage, special edition Harley, the insurance company had stepped up and got him an exact duplicate, though not after Kirishima had landed him a gig as a birthday party entertainer for one of the insurance company´s executive´s little brats. While he was kinda glad to have fans, they were annoying brats!

The bike in question was a classic chopper, shiny black with red details. It was his second favourite thing in the world. He put on his helmet, he had to be a good example for the kids, and drove down the streets, looking for trouble. He found an old woman, somehow older than Recovery Girl, calling for help. Her cat had climbed a tall tree.

Using his explosions to propel himself to the top of the tree, Bakugou looked at the cat and yelled "SHINEEE!" at it. The cat hissed and jumped to safety in its owner´s arms.

"Thank you, young man!" said the ancient person. Bakugou tried his "genuine smile" on someone besides Kirishima for a change, before continuing his patrol.

A mugging, a street drug dealer and a bicycle theft afterwards; the patrol was not particularly momentous, but effective either way. He sent his report to Endeavor and clocked off. He drove the bike closer to the flat, stopping by a butcher shop on the way. The pay was good, and he wanted to surprise Kirishima with some meat. He smiled at how appropriate that thought was.

Himiko Toga reached her cell with a smile on her lips. She couldn't be happier. She had spent the whole day with her Izu-Izu and she now knew he was definitely available!

That voice in her head had only told her to kill him once, before she had been too caught up in the happiness to even listen to its stupid suggestions. He was a couple inches taller than before, a bit more buff, but he had the same kind smile that she had started loving after the "crush" from seeing him injured had matured a bit.

His voice was a bit deeper, his hair just a bit shorter. She was too lucky, she thought. She had pretty much resigned herself to dying in one of the assassinations her brain compelled her to carry out, or to be executed for them, maybe imprisoned for life. She didn't deserve getting her Izu-Izu on a silver plate and maybe even her own life like this, so she was ready to pay whatever price was needed.

She was so happy that she wouldn't even annoy her guards tonight. She had liked the commandos

praising her and Izu-Izu, they were such a great team.

Sergeant Bitchface had left her a big bruise near her collarbone though, so she just might yell an anime opening for laughs.

Nah, but she kinda owes me for that, so she´s gotta order Izu-Izu to rub some ointment on me for the bruise! Oh, she was a genius! Her pillow accepted her as she drifted off to sleep, peacefully, and without sedatives, for once.

Chapter End Notes

This one´s a bit shorter, but next chapter is coming shortly.
The killhouse is inspired by the training level of Call of Duty 4
As always thanks for reading!

Therapy for lads with deadly hands

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Mr. Shigaraki, good day. Shall we begin the test?" the assistant said.

Shigaraki nodded, sitting down in the psychiatrist lounge chair.

"Miss Shiretoko is busy today, so I will be asking you some questions, ok? The hero Wave Motion will assist, as a person you can trust, though she is running a bit late."

Shigaraki felt nervous, today wasn't one of the days Nejire visited! He wasn't mentally prepared… "No need to worry, Mr. Shigaraki, she´s probably just caught in traffic, the city is quite busy today, lots of schools start new terms. So, let me know how I do, ok? I´ve only performed this test twenty times."

The assistant was a short, unremarkable young man with black hair. Shigaraki didn't know the assistant´s Quirk, but he guessed it may have to do with intelligence or mind powers, seeing his career in psychiatry.

"Alright, the first thing I do is ask you about your week. Was there anything in particular that affected you this week, anything you are expecting, or something interesting happened to you?"

Shigaraki thought back to his week, there had only been one thing unusual; a very vivid nightmare that had woken him up in a cold sweat, and he remembered it all. And he was very much looking forward to Nejire visiting on Friday. "There was something I didn't like, I had a nasty nightmare on Tuesday, while I was taking a nap."

"Do you remember the dream? Maybe talking about it could help"

"Maybe when Miss Hadou gets here…Oh, yes, I was looking forward to seeing her this Friday too." Shigaraki smiled involuntarily, the hero´s presence was rather welcome.

The door to the doctor´s office opened and Shigaraki looked back to see who was there. He was met with a smiling Nejire Hadou looking at him. Shigaraki looked down, he felt his face burning in embarrassment "He-hey Miss Hadou…" he said weakly, staring intently at his shoes.

"Nice to see you! And I told you to call me Nejire, silly!"

Shigaraki managed to look up from the ground as Nejire joined the assistant on one of the normal chairs. "We were just discussing how Mr. Shigaraki was looking forward to his meeting with you, Miss Hadou."

Shigaraki didn't know if his weird pale skin was actually blushing, but if he did, he was sure he looked like a tomato as the assistant said that. "Ohh, you were excited to see me, Tenko-kun? I missed you too!"

Shigaraki felt his heart beat faster as she said that and replied "Y-yes, I w-was excited to see you."

"Ok then, relax and tell us about the dream, then."

"Alright." Shigaraki settled down, closed his eyes, and started to remember. The dream had been

very lifelike, and he had remembered everything when he woke up.

“It started like the other nightmares about All for One, the ones where we are fighting him. This time, Midoriya and Bakugou weren’t there to help me. I felt I would lose, but I think I made some good decision in the dream because I got the jump on All for One and managed to touch him, on the back of the head. Just like in real life, he said nothing, it was like a Nomu getting punched, nothing.

"Then I saw another person approach. They were covered in darkness, I couldn’t even tell if it was a man or a woman, but the person was very tall and sort of…blurry. They said “All for One didn’t make you his successor for a reason. You are weak. Would you like to know just how weak?” Then the person turned into a version of myself as I was with the League of Villains, covered in hands.

"This clone attacked me, while saying all the lies All for One put in my head. He was too fast for me, and he grabbed my face. I *felt* myself die, decay to the point where my brain turned to dust. I woke up with a nurse beside me; I had been shouting in my sleep, non-stop, for twenty minutes. It felt very real, I was scared, very scared.”

Shigaraki opened his eyes when he felt a small hand placed on his shoulder, its presence reassuring. It was Nejire, and her face was full of concern.

“Its alright, Tenko-kun, it was just a dream, you are safe.” She smiled at him with kindness. This time Shigaraki didn’t look away. He felt strange around her recently. Was this what friendship felt like? He wasn’t sure friends were supposed to feel their heart beat faster when the other was around, but then again, he didn’t really have experience with friendships.

Kurogiri had been more of a father figure, and the rest of the League had been some sort of bizarre, extremely dysfunctional family; Toga was the “baby”, Twice and Spinner were like some sort of deranged cousins, Magne was the Big Sis, Mr. Compress was kind of an uncle, Dabi felt like a brother he didn’t particularly get along with.

Ujiko had been like a very distant family member that didn’t really count. So, actual friend-friends were still rather new. Did Midoriya consider him a friend? He visited often and treated him with a lot of respect…Maybe it was something else with Nejire? Was he…attracted to her? He certainly didn’t know.

“Thank you for telling us about that dream, Mr. Shigaraki. We should continue onto the first test, word association. I will tell you a word, and you answer with the word that first comes to mind. Ready?” Shigaraki nodded, ready for the exercise.

“Bed”

“Pillow”

“Chair”

“Wooden”

“Vehicle”

“Bike”

“Those were a bit simple, we´ll move onto more abstract ones. Self.”

“Tenko”

“Justice”

“Hero”

“Destruction”

“My old life”

“Ok, now this one´s a biggie. Happiness.”

Seeing Nejire every week! “Uhhh…friendship?”

The assistant noticed he had considered his answer for a second, but it seemed he let it go, giving him a knowing look.

“That´s good progress, you are answering from the subconscious in some of these. We should do the next thing. Miss Hadou, if you would help me with the cards?” Nejire held some thick paper cards, hiding the image printed on the other side. The assistant explained “Tell me what the figure looks like to you.”

Nejire showed him the first card “It looks like Kurogiri´s smoke portals”. The second “Looks like a bowl of spaghetti made of happy faces”

“It kinda looks like a tree”

“I-it is just some inkblots.”

“You were distracted looking at Miss Hadou, please look again.”

“It´s a face of some sort, I kinda see some eyes, but there´s three of them…”

“Ok, now I´ll just file these results and you are free to go.” The assistant left the office, leaving Shigaraki alone with Nejire.

“So, you were distracted looking at me, eh?” quipped the hero, a smug smile on her face.

Shigaraki thought fast and said “Uhhh…yep. Sorry.” *Damn, I didn’t say that cool response I was totally thinking about, she´ll think I´m dumb!*

“Oh, don’t worry! I´m just teasing you!”.

“Huh?!!”

“Its really fun, you blush all over!”

“Hey!”

“I was doing it again, you didn’t actually blush!” They both laughed. It was difficult getting used to laughing when having a good time, he couldn’t remember a single time he had laughed in happiness with the League of Villains. “I like seeing you laugh, Tenko-kun!”

“You made me laugh with that face, trying not to laugh yourself!”

“I have a funny face? You are teasing me now!”

They laughed again. After a while, Shigaraki asked “Are you trying to keep me from thinking again about the dream with laughing and jokes?”

“Well, yes. I hate seeing you sad, upset or scared, and even more because in a nightmare I can´t just tell you its alright. But it is alright, you know? I am here for you and I´m not letting anyone hurt you again, because that’s what heroes do, we protect.” She smiled kindly at him.

Shigaraki didn’t know what to say about that, so instead he changed the subject “So, I finished that book you recommended, the one about Cthulhu! It was so good! Did the author make more?”

Nejire´s eyes gleamed a bit, she had taken a lot of interest in mysterious Elder Gods and Deep Ones after her friend Tamaki had recommended the book to her, she seemed eager to bring another fan into the fold.

“Oh yes! There´s a few about this town, Innsmouth, and strange things happening there, there´s about lost cities, in one they even go to another dimension!”

Shigaraki was no stranger to being passionate about a hobby. He could probably talk for hours about every videogame produced in the last fifty years, and even more about some of the classics.

It was great to see someone talk about their interests with such a passion. Midoriya spoke about heroism this way when he visited; Toga used to speak like that of Midoriya, but Shigaraki wasn’t exactly sure that was 100% healthy.

“Which book next, then?” Shigaraki seemed to always feel awkward and flustered around Nejire in the first minutes, but she had a gift of making him feel at ease, to make him feel listened to, to make him feel important, so he ended up talking as much as she talked every time.

“Am I still gonna see you tomorrow, N-n-Nejire?” asked Shigaraki, still having trouble saying her name, it was a very intimate thing for some people to be called by their first names, he knew.

“Of course! Everyone can use a bit of routine, and for you that means you are stuck with me for a while! I think we should watch a movie in that nice tv in your room!”

“What movie are we watching?”

“It´ll be a surprise. So, you in?”

“Yeah!”

“Well, then it’s a date” Shigaraki almost fainted, all he could hear was “date”. Nejire said farewell. *Date???* The prison guards came in the office to bring him back. *Date?!! Date!!!*

Chapter End Notes

An even shorter chapter, as the next one is chunky and deserves a space on its own.
Thanks for reading!

Hills, navigation and traumatic memories

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

A helicopter approaching ended the day´s training, physical training and weapons familiarization, which Toga was already very proficient in. Izuku had been rather shocked to see Himiko´s progress from the girl who flailed her knife erratically in what amounted to drunken fist boxing; no discernible technique, but getting the job done in unexpected ways.

At this point, Toga could knife fight with the agents and could beat all, save Holy Diver, in a one-on-one match. And Toga really liked her Izu-Izu staring in admiration, it made her feel so great.

The last round of target practice with submachineguns was suspended with the chopper´s arrival. An old cowboy got down, holding his hat. Izuku looked at him with reverence, Toga felt he was familiar looking but couldn't quite place him.

Then he spoke, and she knew he was the one who had called Izuku to come over for the operation "Hey, y´all, good to see you. We´re doing another exercise that may come in handy, some land nav, so get in the choppa."

Only Toga and Izuku got on the helicopter, a military model, coloured dark green. The old man adjusted his coat to sit down, revealing two revolvers at either hip. *Old man´s some sort of gunslinger? Cool!*

Besides the cowboy, Izuku and herself, only a pilot and a large dog, some sort of black and grey husky, occupied the helicopter´s passenger bay. Izuku immediately saw the dog and his eyes sparkled in awe "Its so big and fluffy!" *Izu-Izu is so cute when he sees doggos! The doggo indeed is sooo fluffy!*

The green haired hero was already petting the dog and scratching its ears when Toga got the courage to approach it. Guard dogs unnerved her, though she didn't really know why, she hadn't encountered guard dogs a lot as a villain.

The doggy looked up at her, expecting to be petted, and it wiggled his ears. Izuku said "Here, scratch behind his ear like this." He reached out for her hand and placed it behind the canine´s left ear. Toga felt her face blush even more than normal at the small contact of their hands.

Oh boy he took my hand, he did! This is so much better than trying to stab him! The doggy was satisfied with the ear scratches, and it licked Toga´s hand. She giggled, it was warm and gross!

Izuku looked at Toga with a warm smile, *oh Izu-Izu don't do that, I´m gonna die if you get any more perfect!* "That´s my boy, Marston. He´s old, half deaf and lazy, but I love him to hell and back. And indeed, Deku, he is very fluffy."

The doggo joined its owner and laid down at his feet "I don't think we´ve officially met, Miss Toga. I´m Holden Johns, the Deputy Director of the American intelligence agency that caught you. The idea of recruiting you as a potential asset was my own, as was bringing your pal, Deku. So, you two ready to go? The area is a short journey away."

The helicopter set off, going north. On the way, Toga chatted with Izuku, asking all about the vacation time he was getting outside of their joint training, and how his mom and All Might were doing.

“So it is like a honeymoon!” she said, a smug smile on her face as he stammered, flustered, some excuse that All Might and his mom weren’t actually an item. *Oh, but all you are saying about their time together says otherwise, Izu-Izu!*

Toga just laughed and kept asking more questions, she couldn’t really talk more about the monotonous life in a cell, and she wasn’t too eager to speak about the year she had had, so she just asked about him instead.

“Alright, we are here. Peqoud, take us down. Grab those packs, y'all, you're gonna need 'em. The objective is simple, get to civilization! Go, go, go!” The old man all but kicked them out of the helicopter, and it immediately took off.

“Uhhhh…Izu-Izu, did they give us a map?”

The green hero started going through his pack until he found a plasticized paper topographical map “Here! Though I can't really tell where we are and where we are supposed to go…” he looked just a bit intimidated by the task, hero school probably didn’t teach military map reading.

“I kinda think I know what to do…it´s like sort of a thing I remember but I don’t remember from where…” She pointed at stuff in the map and it felt like she had done something like this a few times before “That is got to be a tall mountain, like that one there in the distance. I think it’s the tallest one I can see and the tallest one in the map. From there we can find another landmark, like this river or that canyon, and follow them. The nature preserve has a limit, we just have to find it.”

Izuku beamed, “Sounds like a plan, Himiko!”

The “mountain” was just some big-ass hill, not an actual mountain, as Toga could see as they got closer. It took the better part of an hour to get to the foothill, and almost two to get on top; by the time they were there, sunset was just under an hour away.

The sky was already starting to turn into shades of orange. It was beautiful. Toga had seen many wonderful things and experienced great moments in the last year, but she felt watching the sunset with her Izu-Izu by her side topped them all by miles. The sun´s dying light glinted from the landmark river, that was where they should go. Toga sat down and Izuku imitated her.

He was rather close, but still at a respectful distance. *You are my perfect boy, you can sit closer if you want, we can cuddle and all and do fun stuff.* The thought of “fun stuff” brought a very red blush to her cheeks. But the closeness made her think she should say something about what she felt, deep down.

“I…I am so thankful to be here, Izu-Izu. When they caught me, I thought they would just kill me, I was only sad because I wouldn’t see you again, hear your voice, look into your eyes. When I woke up and thought about it, I was frustrated. The life you gave me when you saved me in the rubble in Okinawa was a waste, I was a brainwashed mess and I did horrible things!

"I was not even a person at that point, I was a weapon, doing what the nightmares told me! And… when I really thought about all that I felt like an ungrateful idiot, and I thought they really should kill me. But they never did, because you are giving me a second opportunity. I know I don’t deserve this, but I am just, so grateful. So much so.” She broke down in tears.

Izuku, who had gotten closer, embraced her in a powerful, comforting hug. He ran his hand on her back soothingly “It’s all ok, cry all you need, I´m here for you.” *Why do you do this, I am not a good person.* “I want to help, I really do. I don’t care what other people may think about you deserving or not another chance, but I believe in you, and it’s not just because I like you, I really

do”

Toga felt the hero tense up a bit as he said “I like you”. After a while Toga stopped crying and said, “Can I hug you for a little while longer, just while we watch the sunset?”

“Of course.”

They got a bit more comfortable, but neither one broke the embrace. Toga rested her head on his chest. She could feel his heartbeat, a bit fast, and his steady, controlled breathing. She knew he wasn’t exactly used to this kind of thing.

The heartbeat was very…calming. *I could die happy like this, just close my eyes with this feeling. Or maybe live forever like this, it would be just as good.* The sun went down, and the warm temperature dropped.

They had a blanket in each backpack, but they didn’t really want to move from the hug, so they just snuggled in one of them. *Is this heaven? Will they take it all away and make it hell?* Toga fell asleep in a mixture of unease and happiness, it felt like a dream too good to be true.

Izuku Midoriya awoke cold and with his left leg cramping. For a moment he wasn’t sure where he was and was a bit startled to find his right arm immobilised. The instant of panic made him think he had been captured, but the only thing holding him was Toga, hugging his arm like her life depended on it.

She also had most of the blanket on her, Izuku´s other hand holding it so that it would cover her more. She looked really peaceful, which was not something he was used to, at all. When Izuku had encountered Toga as a member of the League of Villains, she had always smiled, like nothing was happening around her except something very curious right in front of her.

When he had saved her in Okinawa, though, she had a completely different expression; she looked lost, terrified and stressed. And now, in custody but acting to get her freedom someday, she had seemed in a state of barely kept control and had broken down twice; when he had first seen her, and yesterday.

Midoriya was frightened by the state her mental health was in, and it hardened his resolve to finish whatever mission the Americans wanted to get her help. There was only so much he could do; wanting to help and being able to actually help were different things.

He couldn’t move without waking Himiko, so he tried to relax and maybe sleep a bit more. He channelled a bit of One for All to his leg without moving it; the burst of energy tensed his muscles and eased the cramp.

Breathing slowly, he let the power return to its dormant state. Now he could try and relax, though he was getting rather conscious of something else quite uncomfortable in his body, was it because it was the morning or because he was cuddling with an attractive girl?

Izuku tried to move a bit to the other side, maybe put himself as the “little spoon”, but Toga was holding him in a very awkward position. *What an awkward situation, I hope no one will ever know!* But anyway, concentrating on *that* wasn’t going to make it any less embarrassing, so he could only pray Toga didn’t wake up right now!

Midoriya did end up getting a bit more comfortable and managed to get a few more minutes of sleep before he felt Toga moving, yawning and rubbing her eyes with one hand. The other didn’t

let him go. She then started poking at him lightly. “Uhhh…Himiko, what are you doing?”

“Just checking you are still real and not some horrible nightmare again. It checks out, very real.” She smiled in relief. “What´s for breakfast, Izu-Izu?”

Toga´s smile looked almost as bright as when she had been unapologetically evil. “We´ve got some army food on the packs, I think. I hope it tastes ok…”

“Ooohhh…this are the kind that´s supposed to be pizza flavoured, nice!” The pizza flavour, though, wasn’t too nice.

Reaching the river took them the entire morning, and it was soon mid-day. All along the way, Toga had been rather talkative, asking Izuku about what was happening in Japan, about his friends and Hero team, about his plans for the future.

In a way, this mission was a sort of a course, he guessed, so it would help with the Hero College he planned to attend. A few institutions provided higher education to heroes, on subjects such as detective work, reconnaissance and working with government agencies, so in a way he was already doing that now.

Izuku noticed Toga glare a bit whenever he mentioned any of his female class or team mates, but she certainly seemed less murderously jealous than before. And she was very surprised Uraraka hadn’t just asked him out at some point.

By the afternoon they had reached a dirt road and walked along it. It was the way out, but they couldn’t see the end of it with its winded path going into the trees.

At sunset, they set down again, this time making their shelter a bit more protective, making a rather cosy lean-to covered by a waterproof tarp and close to the fire they started. Izuku thought about asking Toga about how she had been in the year, to fill in the gaps left by what she left out of her calls, but he hesitated, she could tell him at her own pace, and he didn’t want to bring out any painful memories of a very bad year.

Instead, he asked “Himiko, you have never told me about when you were little. I already told you some of my childhood stories, would you tell me yours?”

“I would like to, but I don’t really remember…I kind of start remembering just…being me…when I was like twelve I guess? I was at this boarding school and the teacher called my name, I answered “present!” and was asked to tell the class about my Quirk.

"I don’t know how I knew how my Quirk worked, but I think I may have remembered it from before that, I don’t know…So I tell them, and they…they all stared at me like I was a monster. My Quirk isn’t a Hero´s, I know, but I couldn’t remember anyone ever being so mean to me.

"I remember the first recess, this group of girls came up to me and started telling me how I was evil, how I was a vampire and that I had to stay away from them. I didn’t know how to react, I didn’t remember how friends worked.

"So, I tried talking to other girls, but whenever I approached, they all ran away. Nobody talked to me, not even the teachers would ask me a question, they didn’t even call attendance. It was like being invisible, but they LOOKED at me. They stared, all the time. It lasted for two months.

“I panicked and tried telling the headmistress what they were doing. She listened and said it would change. The teachers started asking me questions again, and I even made a friend. Her name was Rei Nagayama. She wasn’t too afraid of me, and they bullied her too.

"But then the girls saw her with me. I hadn't been friends with her for even a full week, and Rei´s bullying got so much worse; they stole her things, they poured a bucket of ice water on her as she slept, they even beat her with sticks in one recess when no teacher was looking.

"One day, they gave her a key. In the middle of class. It opened the door to the roof. The building was eighteen stories high. Rei left the classroom in tears; the teacher didn't say a word.

"The next class was with a teacher that seemed to care a bit more, she had been one of the teachers who had become friendlier. As I was going into the classroom, one of the bullies pointed at me and said I had pushed Rei off the roof. They had found her shoes on the roof, and her corpse on the ground.

"The teacher, who I thought was on my side, called me a monster. I ran away, to the dorms. The bunkbeds were little comfort, but I hid underneath my bed anyway. Then the bullies came in. One barred the door with a wooden plank, the others had the sticks they had used to beat Rei, the leader had a sharpened wooden stick and a mirror on her hand.

"Her two cronies dragged me by the hair from under the bed, screaming and crying. The leader held the mirror up to my face and said, "Vampires have no reflection." Then she smashed it on my head. The glass cut my scalp and I bled. I tried to stand and defend myself, but they hit my legs with the sticks.

"The leader approached me with the stake, saying "To kill a vampire we´ve gotta stab it in the heart with a wooden stake!" She stabbed me with it, and my mind kind of snapped. I twisted my body, so it just cut me instead of stabbing my heart.

"I released myself from the cronies´ grasp and grabbed the leader´s wrist. I broke her arm and took the stake away from her. I felt this…bloodlust. My own voice yelled in my head "KILL HER! TAKE HER FACE! BECOME HER!" I stabbed the first girl, then another one, then another one. The last one was trying to unbar the door.

"I bit down on her neck. I transformed into her, I couldn't control my Quirk in that state. I bit the leader´s carotid artery and drank and drank and drank. I took her clothes from her closet and ran away. She died covered in her own blood and her own piss between two bunk beds.

"I sort of...drifted then. I don't remember much. I was just…surviving. What I had done in self-defence started to become my life. I liked the taste of blood so much…and the thrill of being someone else. I liked being someone else, anyone. "

Izuku was shocked by the story. Bullying always brought him to a very dark place inside his head. He may have made peace with Kacchan, but the damage to his self-worth and to his mental health was still real. He was no stranger to the teachers turning a blind eye, or people hurting others in earnest.

The way her tormentors had used her teeth and her Quirk to demean her hit very close to the *Deku* he had once been. When Toga was finished, Izuku pulled her in for a tight hug.

He was crying bitter tears as he said "No one will ever treat you like that again, I won´t let them, I won´t." He held her like letting go would let her disappear. Toga was quiet but hugged him back just as much.

Chapter End Notes

Toga´s backstory is a complete blank slate so far, so it has been extremely fun making up her story. More details will come in the future!
And as always thanks for reading, and comments are greatly appreciated!

In which Toga goes to Disney World

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Anna Dobinek took a sip from her red Gatorade bottle. Waiting for the two teenagers was rather boring, but then again most military work was “hurrying up and waiting”, so nothing too unusual. The hike would have taken her team under a day, and the two were now on mid-day of the second day.

The exercise wasn’t just for the hike, the pair were expected to bond even more. She wasn’t sure she liked the idea that much anymore; Toga was gaining a little more control, and she clearly worked well with Midoriya, but the hero had accepted a bit too readily to take on American intelligence wet work.

Anna thought maybe it was just the hormones deciding, but she also considered how the hero had somewhat repaired his relationship with a former bully through sheer stubbornness. She thought his judgement may not be objective if push came to shove.

In the distance she could see two figures approaching. The dark tinted sunglasses shielding her night vision quirked eyes didn’t let her see them in full detail yet.

“Get the car ready, lovebirds inbound” she told her companion, the agent codenamed Flight Plan. Flight Plan straightened his khaki pants, shook his keys and got to the vehicle.

Anna walked into the diner again, bought some more snacks and drinks, and walked to the car to wait for the two hikers. Leaning on the dark sedan, she sipped again on her red Gatorade. Her favourite flavour, it reminded her of her childhood.

“Kept us waiting, huh?” The two teenagers shared a look, a bit sheepish and embarrassed. They were clearly more at ease with each other, so exercise successful, it seems.

“We didn’t know we were supposed to hurry, Commander Bitchface…” said Toga, smiling mischievously at Midoriya. Anna rolled her eyes at the nickname. It wasn’t *that* bad. “Did you give me a promotion, Toga? I was Sergeant Bitchface before.”

“Congratulations, ma´am!” the girl beamed at her. Midoriya laughed at her joke; they were actually kinda cute together when they weren’t being completely ruthless in the training field.

“Well, you made it back, so you aren’t hopeless on land nav. Get on the back seat, you two, we are going back. The first two targets are ready whenever you are. You can have two days of rest and to say good bye, Midoriya. Then the jet is ready for the mission.”

They got in the car and drove to Midoriya´s hotel. The trip back was uneventful. The two teenagers spoke softly in Japanese, so Anna couldn’t keep up with their conversation without effort. She took a short nap, and soon the were close to the city. “Here´s your stop, you two.”

“I´m staying with Izu-Izu?”

“Yeah, your stuff is already in his room.” The girl blushed hard. Anna had no idea how a human face could do that, these Japanese kids just blushed like crazy.

She reached into the boot of the car for a medium cardboard box and tossed it at Midoriya

“Pregnancies affect the mission, kids.” She smiled smugly as the kid realized what was in the box and turned into an embarrassed tomato. Toga´s eyes gleamed, and she grabbed unto the lad´s arm.

Flight Plan scratched his curly hair and said, “Think these hotheads will work well?”

“Yeah, they took everything we threw at them this week like it was nothing. They´ve been through tough shit. They´ll do.”

Toshinori Yagi was feeling quite happy, perhaps the happiest he had been in recent years.

He felt very much at home in America and was excited to show his second homeland to his new family. He was glad to have found Inko Midoriya. Even if their first meeting had been difficult, with her not wanting Izuku to be in danger, the two had eventually come to become trusted friends, and then something much more intimate.

As All Might, he had carried the weight of the world on his shoulders, pushing friends away in fear the attachment could be used to hurt them to get to him. He hadn’t realized how wrong he had been, how comforting it was to share his burden with another person.

Inko made him feel, in a way, *complete.* And he was just so proud of Izuku, his boy. His spirit was so strong and kind. He had been very concerned at first with the whole Toga situation but seeing how happy the lad was every day after training, he couldn’t help to somewhat approve, if not for the sake of redeeming Toga, at least for Izuku´s happiness.

Still, he hadn’t expected both of them to arrive at the hotel at lunchtime. Inko had nearly gotten a heart attack when she saw the former villain latched onto the boy´s arm with a proud look on her face.

Inko didn’t know the operation her son was taking place in, for security reasons, but both Izuku and Toshinori had assured her it was one he could handle. She knew nothing of Toga being a villain, the media had less information about the League than what they made apparent. But still, it was her little boy being held by some girl!

When Izuku reached them he stuttered, “M-mom, All Might, h-hi!” Inko looked about ready to faint. “T-this is Himiko, Himiko Toga, she´s uh…in my uhhh…team?”

Toga shook Inko´s hand and pulled her into a hug. Inko was crying rivers “My boy is growing too fast!” she squealed. It was just like when he had introduced Hatsume, and his team. But Izuku hadn’t exchanged glances like that with his other team mates!

After a few minutes of a motherly hug, Toga separated and greeted All Might excitedly “I always told Izu-Izu that he had the best dad!”. Toshinori felt rather proud in the moment. Inko was shocked by the nickname “Izu-Izu”. It was going to take some getting used to.

The two teenagers joined them in the hotel restaurant, buffet styled so they could get a lot of food after the two-day exercise. Both returned with plates full of all sorts of food, and Izuku tried to get Toga to improve her tableside manners to little avail. At least she wasn’t just using her hands!

After the amount of food made them drowsy and Toga had started nodding off in her seat, Inko said “You two look quite tired…Izuku, why don’t you take Toga to her room, so she can rest? You too look really tired, dear.”

“Ok mom! See you!” This time Toga didn’t grab Izuku´s arm but sneaked her hand to his while she thought they were out of sight. Izuku held her hand confidently.

When they were gone, Inko looked at Toshinori with concern “Is that girl the one he has been talking on the phone all year long? And is she the one that Ochako warned us about? The one obsessed with Izuku? What is my son doing, Toshi? Is this like with Katsuki?”

All Might sighed and said, “Yes, I´m afraid it is like that, and she is indeed. And Izuku does indeed believe he can bring her to the side of good. The girl is in a very vulnerable state at the moment, trauma has mounted up on the poor child, but with good help, I believe there is hope.”

“I…I just hope she doesn’t end up hurting my son.” Toshinori placed his hand on Inko´s shoulder “So do I, so do I.”

Himiko Toga had never been happier, at least in the almost six years of life she remembered. She was walking around the most famous theme park in the world with her Izu-Izu. It didn’t feel real, but she constantly pinched herself to check she wasn’t dreaming it. It was real!

The agents had given Izu-Izu some tickets, to go to any of the four main parks or to any of the smaller ones, and some sort of coupons that allowed them to skip the lines. It was so much fun so far!

They had gone to the oldest one, the one where every area was called a kingdom. The rollercoasters, the turkey legs, that quirky little ride where international children sang about the world being small…

It was a whole new experience. Izu-Izu had never been here too, because his family had never been exactly wealthy, so it was new for him as well.

Toga loved seeing the innocent smile of her hero, just grinning at the decoration, the mascots, the food…With one hand on a jumbo soda and another on Izuku's, Toga felt like she was a small child, or at least how she supposed a small child would feel in this situation. *Why DON’T I remember anything? Is it like a repressed memory or something?*

“Himiko, are you alright?” Izu-Izu brought her back to the present. His expression was worried.

“Oh, I just got caught in my thoughts, is all.” She smiled at him, carefree. “So, are we going to that Space Mountain or what, Izu-Izu?” She didn’t wait for an answer and just dragged the hero along to the futuristic section of the park.

I should talk with him about how I don’t remember anything before, he is really smart, and he will know what to do. But maybe I gotta steal a kiss from him before we get serious and sad and all.

The rollercoaster seriously lived up to its hype, Toga reflected as they sat on a bench nearby. Renovated recently, it captured the essence of what an indoor coaster should be.

At least that was Toga's completely uneducated opinion.

Now that I think about my education, it’s really rather incomplete. Kurogiri taught me some pretty

advanced math stuff, I learned some history and languages last year, I know stuff about sleep, lucid dreams and nightmares, all that stuff about my Quirk and stealth and combat…but I probably suck at writing, like, letters and stuff, at things like philosophy too, I guess.

What did Izu-Izu even study? I never bothered to ask about his subjects.

The space mountain was the last attraction they had time for if they still wanted to go see that movie in the "Downtown" park, so Izuku led her to the monorail that connected the parks.

Toga didn't wait when they sat down and cuddled up to him, resting her head on his chest and closing her eyes, she was a bit tired from the day and wanted to be awake for the movie.

Toga woke up when she felt a hand softly brushing her hair. It took her an instant to recognize Izuku´s scarred hand, but by that moment she had already reached toward a knife that wasn't there.

Izu-Izu looked really startled "I´m sorry, instinct" she said, shrugging "But do continue!". She put her head close to his arms again.

Izuku slowly got his hand on her hair again and started softly caressing her scalp. *Sooooo gooood… Oh no, I think I´m doing THAT face, the other passengers are gonna stare! But don't stop doing that, I love it!*

After a few moments she knew they could easily spend like that for the whole journey, but she kinda wanted to return the favour.

"Your turn!" Toga grabbed Izuku´s head energetically and placed it on her chest. *You like that, huh? Comfortable? Just you wait! I´m going to make your brain melt!* She started moving her fingers through the green curls, scratching a bit at the darker haired roots. *I love this hair god damnit. It was meant for this.*

She lingered on a swirl of hair on top of her hero´s head. A quick look at Izuku´s face told her he was enjoying it, he looked completely relaxed.

She gently scratched in concentric circles, massaging his scalp tenderly. His hair was a bit shorter and tidier than when they had met, but it was still such a joy to see. And run her fingers through, apparently.

Izuku was pretty much asleep, and their stop was quickly approaching, so Toga had to think fast. *You could very easily take his blood right now, look at that vein on his neck. Yummy! Don't you love him anymore? What better statement of love than BECOMING HIM. TAKE HIS FACE, HIS BODY. HIS FAMILY, HIS FRIENDS.*

It was her own voice, but all…wrong, telling her that. *Fuck off, voice inside my head, I changed! Now I really love him!* The voice let go and stopped talking. It was getting more aggressive now that she could tell it wasn't her own thought.

The stop was just a few minutes away. She wasn't about to bite Izu-Izu, but she still had to wake him up. *Well that's easy, let's do this, Sleeping Beauty style.*

She grabbed the back of Izuku´s head and held him still as she lowered her lips onto his. It woke him up indeed; his eyes shot open and he almost choked. Toga gave him some space, and then kissed him again. It wasn't exactly like their first kiss in Okinawa, but it was so much what Toga needed right now!

When they separated Toga said with a wink "Next time you steal the kiss, hero." He nodded with

determination in his eyes. “And just in time for the stop! Let´s go see that movie!”

The movie was a British drama film about spies, with surprisingly good humour. Both enjoyed it, even if Toga was much more focused on holding Izuku´s hand than the sarcastic comments and witty banter.

Izu-Izu looked quite excited about new ideas he had after seeing the film, which he quickly wrote down on a cinema napkin. *Ughhh…he´s gonna discuss that with that Hatsume, isn’t he? Maybe we could trick Uraraka into killing Hatsume…*

For the first time I kinda agree with you, fucking annoying voice in my head, though living in my Izu-Izu´s friendzone in enough punishment for now!

Izu-Izu called for the agents on his phone to get picked up. *I guess we save money on a cab.* Today it was the agent with the extra fingers and the Quirkless Brit on the car. Izuku quickly started asking them stuff, and it turned out the extra fingers guy was a big fan of the spy movie they had just seen.

The British guy argued that it was completely unrealistic, and that as an actual agent he knew. Toga tuned it all out, she was much more excited by the prospect of getting room service with Izu-Izu on the room they shared.

The Agency was seriously her guardian angel, putting them in the same room was a stroke of genius. *Or maybe we could smuggle a whole pizza from the buffet? This mouse hoodie can survive a little grease in the pockets!*

They didn’t see All Might´s skeletal form around or Izu-Izu´s mom either at the hotel, maybe they were having dinner somewhere fancy? The pair went straight to the restaurant area, Izuku had like the idea of bringing food to the room and had asked for some disposable containers at the hotel kitchens.

Toga was still amazed at the food variety available, it was easily the most diverse selection she had ever seen. And after a time on prison food, a year traveling around and living on whatever she could afford, steal or cook when possible, and her entire life living on low quality Japanese food, she was delighted with new options.

Shrimps, all sorts of pasta, steak, actual tacos…Toga grabbed a bit of everything that grabbed her attention in the containers Izuku had acquired, and they took their food to the room.

Apparently, it had been the Agency´s plan all along to have them share a room, and Toga again counted her blessings. *I may have a kill switch on my ankle, but they put us together! Too bad there ´s two beds!*

Toga had been respectful of Izuku´s personal space, after suggesting they sleep on the same bed made him faint, his nose bleeding. *I can wait to get closer, precious Izu-Izu, I could probably outwait a prison sentence for you!*

They sat down on Izuku´s bed and opened their meals. Izuku had grabbed some barbeque ribs that he had absolutely loved “Its like Katsudon, but also not! They are soooo tasty!”, a slice of vegetarian pizza, a large portion of salad, a chicken wrap and small bowl of grapes as desert. They barely spoke as they ate, concentrating on the new flavours mostly.

Toga looked up as Izu-Izu brought his hand to her cheek “You, errr…have some sauce there”. He gave her a shy smile as he wiped off the little smear of tomato sauce from the cold cuts pizza she

was eating. *That was smooth, goddamn.*

Toga blushed and gave him a toothy smile in return. After their comfortable dinner, all the walking of the day and the drowsiness from the amount of food caught up to them and they decided to sleep.

Very reluctantly, Toga got to her side of the room. She was glad the agents had returned most of her possessions (except for her weapons), so she could show off her Deku t-shirt instead of the totally un-cute prison uniform!

Toga threw off her new hoody, bought the same day at the park, her socks and the jeans they had given her. Izu-Izu quickly looked away, flustered. *Come on, I know you like my legs, what´s wrong with staring a bit?*

With her Deku shirt on, she said "You turn around now! Do you like it?" Izuku was quite surprised to see her wearing his merchandise, it seemed. And maybe a bit proud at being recognized as a famous hero. "I didn't even know they made Deku t-shirts…"

"It's the first edition, I pre-ordered it the moment they were announced!" Suddenly flustered, Izuku looked away, stammering while trying to excuse himself to wash his teeth or something. *Oh, he noticed there´s nothing underneath the shirt, nice!*

Izuku changed too, to an old t-shirt with kanji saying, "red sports shoes" and boxers. Toga had just enough restraint not to jump him then and there, but not enough to not ogle at him. Panicking a bit at the attention, the hero turned off the lights of the room. Toga sighed in defeat. "Good night, Himiko" Izuku said softly.

"Sweet dreams, Izu-Izu." Toga listened as Izuku´s breathing became regular and deep as he fell asleep. The sound was very, very calming.

Chapter End Notes

The operation starts next time.
Thanks for reading!

Eyes on the Other Side

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Orelov was grateful for his, mostly useless (in most situations), Quirk whenever he was up in the crow´s nest, behind a scope. His Quirk, “cushioned ribs” allowed him to take a pretty strong punch, maybe even a super-strong punch, without breaking his ribcage, but most importantly, it made lying down on hard surfaces comfortable.

It had made him a successful hunter in his childhood, and when the war had started in Uzbekistan, it had made him a sniper for the rebels, one of the countless militias worldwide that called themselves the “Quirk Liberation Army”.

The real QLA had probably fought a hundred years back, and copycats had appeared in almost every shithole in the world ever since, firing up angry kids with Quirks to fight against whatever authority was around. He had his share of atrocities committed, his share of horrors witnessed, a full account of how a man can lose innocence and hope, and a complete lack of interest in making the world a better place.

He had seen it all go to shit, had found that no cause was big enough for all, not fighting for “good” or “justice”. So, he fought for money.

And at the moment the money was good. Good enough to buy whatever would keep him out of the present, away from the memories and the nightmares. Through his nose, up his vein or from a glass bottle, it didn’t really matter much.

Anyway, he was expected to concentrate on the job at hand. His boss was meeting the representatives of some other group and expected some trouble. Apparently, the boss had lost some contacts recently and that made him paranoid.

Orelov didn’t care much, the boss was the source of his orders, but he had someone above, going up an unknown number of levels, up to some shady shit.

The boss was some sort of businessman on his day job, maybe even a CEO. Again, Orelov didn’t give a shit. The job was to protect his ass in a meet on neutral ground, a rural estate in Pakistan, about an hour away from the port of Karachi.

The other group arrived on a military transport helicopter, escorted by two gunships, which circled around before allowing the main heli to land. The helicopters were marked with green camouflage and had red flags with swords on them on the doors.

From the helicopter emerged an officer and a squad of commandos in heavy combat armour and submachineguns. The commandos had no apparent Quirks, and judging by the insignia they bore, Orelov knew why.

The Mountain Brigade of Ndege Mweusi´s Hunter-Killer Regiment, perhaps the most ruthless group of Quirkless people on the planet. A broken skull with blood pouring from the eye sockets, within a black triangle, on a red background.

The Hunter-Killer Regiment was five thousand men strong, and from those, the best, handpicked elite hundred, were the Mountain Brigade.

The name itself wasn't particularly intimidating, perhaps something had been lost in translation. The crimes against humanity the group had committed put most of the horrors Orelov had witnessed to shame. The boss was dealing with scum of the worst kind.

The boss was understandably nervous. His own bodyguards were outnumbered. The businessman ´s Quirk, the ability to find loopholes in accounting logs and opportunities in the stock market, would be very little defence against ice cold killers like the Mountain Brigade.

Orelov was pretty much screwed if the African warlord´s men went violent. He might kill the entire squad with two magazines of his anti-materiel rifle, but the gunships could turn the crow's nest into dust. Or he could shoot the pilots and be killed from the ground by the commando squad.

Orelov looked through his scope at the meeting. He had no way to know what they were talking about, he had no skill at lip reading. The Mountain Brigade officer was confident as he approached the boss. He dwarfed the businessman by a foot and was twice as broad.

Orelov put a bead on the officer´s head, just between the eyes. The boss gave the officer a folder with papers, some sort of blueprints. One of the commandos handed over a briefcase to one of the bodyguards.

The bodyguard checked the contents; full of diamonds. The officer and the boss shook hands, the commando grasping it hard enough that the businessman´s hand looked broken. The officer gave a hand signal, waving his hand around an invisible axis, telling the men it was time to leave.

Orelov sighed in relief. It was one thing to go to a shady deal expecting it to go wrong, and another thing entirely to do that with Ndege Mweusi´s best troops. The three helicopters left, and after a short wait, the boss called him down. They were heading for the airport, back to Singapore.

Their own helicopter, a civilian model painted white and blue, was a few minutes away, to save them the trouble of going through the evening rush hour on Karachi. He allowed himself a smoke break before going down to join the others. The smooth menthol flavour was one of the only things worthy of being sober.

Taking a last puff, Orelov threw the cigarette butt on the tower´s concrete floor. He slung the rifle on his back and began to climb down the ladder on the tower´s outside wall. About half way down, he saw one of the perimeter guards join up the team around the boss. It was Ilyias, a merc from Chechnya, with a shielding Quirk on his left arm.

Something about him seemed off, but the others didn't seem to notice. Orelov continued climbing down and saw Ilyias raise his left hand as he approached the boss. He was a bit too close to the boss, thought Orelov, as a wave of air was shot in his direction.

Its strength was overwhelming, and he lost his hold on the ladder, falling the last three meters on his cushioned ribs. Getting back up, he saw Ilyias stab the boss with a knife.

The Chechen threw himself to the floor as the bloodstain on the boss' chest turned his white suit red and he collapsed. Another shockwave sent the rest of his guards flying off their feet.

The first to get up, a young Japanese punk with a healing Quirk, named Josuke, tried shooting Ilyias down, but the Chechen melted away to reveal a short woman in a sneaking suit, who used her dagger to control Josuke´s rifle and direct it away before he could hit her.

The assassin disarmed the young punk, using the knife as an extension of her arm. She flipped it over in her hand, to an icepick grip, and punched Josuke on the throat with the pommel.

Josuke was down, but Miklos and his twin Sebastos were on the assassin immediately, trying to use their bear claws against her. But the twins were lumbering and slow, and the assassin was lithe and nimble, and she cut at them precisely, the two falling down with little bloodloss.

Orelov aimed the anti-materiel rifle at the assassin´s centre mass. At this distance, he was unlikely to miss. The crosshair centred right above her heart.

The assassin started to move, but she was too slow. There was movement on his left side, very fast, a blur of green. Orelov pulled the trigger, making the minute correction to the assassin´s trajectory.

A meter away from the crosshairs, a man of medium height and athletic build held the assassin, bridal style. He was wearing a green jumpsuit with black and white highlights, with a few armour plates in some places. Judging from his face, he was a young adult, or maybe a teenager.

Orelov switched his aim instantly, the crosshair now on the teen´s chest. The kid raised his gloved right hand and flicked his finger at Orelov. The shockwave sent Orelov flying and made him miss, but he recovered quickly.

Against such an opponent he had little hope of using long range attacks, so he switched on the spikes on his boots, anchoring him to the ground, took out his stun baton, and advanced. The teen gently lowered the assassin onto the ground and charged at him.

Orelov had twenty years of experience brawling against men with defensive Quirks, like skin hardening; offensive Quirks, like arm spikes, and mutant types, and most long-range Quirk users weren't too challenging up close. This kid could manipulate the air, apparently, and with no distance to move the air he would have no chance!

Orelov attacked, deliberate strikes of the stun baton hitting his opponent on the arms and legs. The kid caught most blows with the armour on his suit, and the rest blocking with arms and legs. Then he got a bit closer, and kicked, his bright red shoes connecting with Orelov´s ribs.

A normal human would have been incapacitated; this kid was damn strong. Orelov renewed his assault, meeting with more and more resistance. The kid used a swift kick to his kneecap to bring him down, an elbow to the back of the head, and a knee to the face.

Orelov had taken beatings from actual bears, so it wasn't enough to kill him, but goddamn, he was not in a good way.

Behind, the assassin was fighting against Stavro's shovel hands and Asa's eye laser. It seemed she had the upper hand.

Orelov got in closer to the kid in the green jumpsuit and used both hands to smash the stun baton on his head. It gave him an opening to slip on his brass knuckles and do a combination of jabs to the kidneys, an uppercut to the diaphragm and a hook to the left side of the face.

The punches to the abdomen had little effect, but the punch to the face had some rather instant consequences: he found a knife stuck in his thigh, thrown by the assassin.

She shouted in English "Don't fucking touch my Izu-Izu!" The kid, who apparently was named "Izu-Izu", used the moment of distraction to pull his arm back, energy glowing around him, and shout in a heavily accented English "Detroito Smash!!!" as he punched Orelov in the chest.

The rural estate flew past him, and he was dragging along the highway, three hundred meters away. His clothes were torn, his limbs were too hurt to move, and the only thing that had saved him from dying was his padded ribs. He felt consciousness slip away and everything faded.

Orelov awoke on a hospital bed next to the twin mercs, Miklos and Sebastos. Bandages covered their arms, but they seemed mostly fine. A white-haired man in a non-descript dark suit sat beside the bed.

“Ah, you're finally awake, Mr. Orelov. You will be glad to hear that your contract hasn’t expired, you have even been given a bonus, for, let us say…bravery on the field of battle. But I am sorry that you can't spend it just yet, as the company needs you in Africa. Another of our executives is in peril as well, and your resolve gave us a good impression.”

“Well, what the fuck, then Africa it is.”

“Great! In that case allow us to speed up your recovery with some of our own staff.” The man's gaze made Orelov's spine chill.

If he didn’t accept, he was sure he'd be offed faster than he could say “Nurse, help”. And now there was no doubt; the company that hired him as a merc was very much tied to the web of some pretty big player.

He had a hunch it was Pestilentia's group, and that was pretty fucking unsettling.

The creepy white-haired guy finally left.

Orelov blinked as the light was turned on to the side, he looked that way and saw that he was in a completely different hospital now, and he was completely alone.

A cold feeling ran down his spine. When a doctor and a pair of nurses came to check up on him, he saw that their eyes were completely dead, lifeless. Their words were mechanical, robotic.

Their movements were unsettling. But they gave him medicine that would cure him, so he pushed the thoughts out of his mind. Sleep came easy that night, and the dreams were very vivid, he could remember all when he woke up the next day.

He had been in some sort of school, urged on to an office. The place was grey and drab, the architecture reminiscent of the Soviet buildings in Uzbekistan he had seen when he was young.

A symbol on the staircase reminded him somehow of the Mountain Brigade, even if the shapes were different, the *feel* was the same.

The office was well furnished, but dusty, abandoned. The heavy door closed behind him. The desk was bisected by glass, the type used in prison for visits. On the other side he could see a dark outline, a person, he couldn’t tell if a man or woman.

The shade motioned to the chair on his side. Orelov sat down. “You are just a pawn in a little game I have set up, your role to play is minimal. Don’t worry your little brain with it all, I might just tell you everything in due time. Serve us well, Vasily Orelov, and you may live a life with no regrets.”

The voice was at the same time dangerous and comforting, alluring and revolting. The shadow dissolved into nothingness, and Orelov awoke. What a weird fucking dream, he thought.

A week later he was discharged from the hospital, cleared of all damage except for a few bruises.

He didn’t see any of the other mercs again but was scooped up by company men and put on a plane bound for South Africa. On arrival, he was met by a typical family man in khaki pants and a guayabera shirt.

His new boss. Some sort of charity guy? The new boss had a firm handshake, an American accent, an easy laugh and seemed the kind of guy one would want as a neighbour.

But there was a dangerous feel to his stare, even if his whole appearance was nothing but ordinary and reassuring. Orelov got on the four-wheel drive SUV the new boss motioned to, and they started a two-hour drive away from Pretoria, into the South African countryside. It was a pretty landscape, he admitted.

They finally made it to a small village, a campsite marked with “Helping Hands NGO” logos commanding the hillside to the north. Doctors and volunteers were all around, some staff members setting up a stand to deliver food to the villagers.

They drove past that, and into the high fence of the campsite. Modern prefab buildings and state-of-the-art medical tents made up the camp, with a two-story structure at the centre, a big label saying “Lab 1” on the wall.

The new boss walked him through the Lab building, to a small office filled with diplomas, photos and awards. “Please close the door behind you, Mr. Orelov.”

Shutting the door and taking a seat, Orelov waited for his new employer to speak.

“They told me you were the only survivor of the attack on the Singaporean. I need you to tell me all about it.” He hadn’t been the only survivor; the only casualty had been the boss... then again, maybe the assassin had finished off the rest in the hospital after he was moved.

He told the philanthropist as much, who replied “Hmm, indeed. What about the attack itself?”

“There were two perps, both young, a guy and the killer. I couldn’t really concentrate on their faces or identifying them. The male had some sort of strength enhancing Quirk, the female some sort of disguise, she impersonated one of our own to stab the boss.

"Both are veteran fighters, even at their young age. They could have killed us plenty of times over; the kid's punch in the end was no joke, I think he only punched me that hard because he knew it wouldn’t kill me. And he was holding back.”

“If they strike again, can you deal with them?”

“Gimme a good hiding spot and I'll kill 'em for you”

“Good. I think they might be after me next. Fucking All for One, dead and still his revenge follows.”

“All for One? THAT guy?” Orelov knew about All for One, every criminal did. This boss had pissed of someone like THAT?

“I was sure our partnership with end up wrong for me, so I acted first, and sent a hit squad of my best guys with the last delivery we made three years ago. It wasn’t personal, just business, and my guys failed. They were probably horrifically killed. All for One called me and said it was business as usual, but he knew what I had done.”

Well, if anything, this philanthropist had balls. Bigger ones than his brain. “Boss, may I say that

was fucking stupid?”

“I know it was”

“But didn’t he die for real last year? Was that assassin still getting paid with her employer dead?”

“I guess, Mr. Orelov. And thing is, I really don’t want to die. I know I'm a huge scumbag, kidnapping kids with useful Quirks is a pretty direct path to hell, I´m sure. But I'd like to see my kids graduate, at least, so please help me.”

“I don’t give a fuck about your sob story, boss, I just want cash for booze. So, don’t worry, they won’t get the jump on us this time.”

A few days passed. Mosquitos were a fucking annoyance, and he was constantly taking meds against malaria; the water supply was pretty much non-existent; the locals were just as likely to beg him for money as to stab him in the back with a shard of glass, and the news were not good for this side of Africa.

Ndege Mweusi was pushing south again, raiding parties of Hunter-Killer Regiment soldiers and militia groups alike burning their way through, paving the way for tanks, planes and helicopters.

The US armed forces were engaging the warlord on all fronts, supported by the smaller militaries of Europe and Asia, professional Heroes and humanitarian groups helping the civilians where possible.

Russia and China might have swayed the tide against Ndege Mweusi, but they were not willing to cooperate with the Americans; Chinese expeditionary forces had even taken cities from Americans instead of fighting the warlord's troops.

And the other mercs whispered about Ndege Mweusi acquiring new weapons. That had to be related to the documents his last boss had delivered to the Mountain Brigade. He hoped it wasn’t nukes or biochemical weapons; that shit was nasty.

Sunsets in Africa almost made it worthwhile. He paused his lookout to see the sun go down. It made him want to sing about the circle of life. He would have to switch to night vision soon.

An explosion a few kilometres away brought his eye to the scope. It seemed two gangs were clashing in the nearest village, angry teens throwing superpowers at each other. The light was fading fast, but it was still too bright for his night scope. Another explosion in the other village, a bit louder this time.

Gunshots, more offensive Quirks, what could only be extremely loud cursing. It was well outside of the effective range of his rifle. The .75 calibre round might make it all the way, but not hit whatever he intended, and at the distance it was like firing a mortar.

One of the doctors walked up to him, offering a cold water bottle. He didn’t know the woman too well, but her smile was kind, and he was a bit thirsty, so he took the bottle. He took a long gulp of water and got back on the scope.

He had a good shot on most windows, and the tents showed the shadows of the people within. The boss was sitting in his office, reading some papers. With the scope, he could read as well as if he had been there. “Mweusi takes another city from the Chinese PLA on push southwards”

Keeping the boss' window uncovered had been his idea, he could easily kill anyone approaching. And a .75 round would put down pretty much anyone.

He took another swig of the water bottle. With no running water, they depended almost entirely on bottles. Maybe if these people didn't kill children with Quirks out of fear and ignorance, a few could get together and fix their damn situation.

He felt his right foot go a bit numb and kicked a bit to get some sensation back. Lying down for 24 hours straight was bound to make his legs cramp at least a bit, even with bathroom breaks.

His left foot started feeling numb too, and his fingers started cramping. What the fuck was happening? Was this a stroke? He couldn't move his hands anymore! He kicked with his whole leg, trying to get himself to a kneeling position, get a doctor for first aid.

Maybe the one that had given him the bottle was nearby, he could make it. His thoughts were panicked; he tried to concentrate and not think of his grandfather clutching at his chest when he died.

He managed to get on a knee, his arms floppy at the sides. He tried to stand, put his leg gave way, making him fall on his back. The doctor was rushing his way to help, a medical bag on her hands. "Help! Help!" he managed to grunt.

He didn't feel any pain on his chest, but he was too afraid to think about that. The female doctor knelt beside him, taking a syringe from the bag. Was it empty?

"Here, here…" She slid the needle into his vein. It was a large needle, the kind used for blood samples…The doctor took his blood with the syringe. It was painful, Orelov had always been afraid of syringes.

"Why?" he managed to ask?

"Quirk stuff, I guess. I didn't think I'd see you here, so good to see you again!" her voice was young and energetic, at odds with her middle-aged face.

She placed a cotton with rubbing alcohol on the vein and pulled out the syringe. She put on a band aid with a teddy bear on his arm, and then removed the needle from the syringe, putting it back in the bag. She then drank his blood.

"What the fuck" Orelov managed to say. Before his eyes, the doctor was replaced by himself, as he had seen himself in the mirror a day ago. The scrubs the doctor had used had melted into his fatigues.

He was pushed to the side, not feeling anything from the neck down, his voice caught in his throat. He watched himself take position at the anti-materiel rifle, aim, and shoot directly into the boss' window. He heard yelling and panic.

His doppelganger rubbed its shoulder "I think my Quirk wasn't that good at making the padded chest, friend! It hurt like a bitch!" His face melted away in dark grey goo, and instead of himself, he was face to face with the assassin.

"Was good seeing ya again, friend! Toodles!"

The assassin rushed into the camp, disappearing into the night behind a prefab module. In a few seconds, he was staring down the barrels of his team mate's rifles. It was good that a bit of control was returning to his limbs, as he could raise his hands in surrender.

Anna Dobinek was very pleased with the results of her pair of assets. Invaluable intel on Ndege Mweusi, a briefcase full of diamonds, two targets down, and the only witness remaining used as a scapegoat, after a shady crew of criminals had killed the survivors of Toga and Midoriya's first mission.

The prime suspect was Pestilentia.

Stellar work, the budget needed relatively low, and the operations completely deniable. She felt a bit of remorse now that she knew Midoriya a bit more, in case they would have to disavow him; the kid had a heart of gold, and she knew making him the scapegoat was pretty much a crime on itself. But so far, they had no reason to throw the pair under the bus.

Texas Red was pleased as well, his brainchild was working perfectly. He had told Anna that it was a bit of a competition between his project and the R&D Director's which was a bipedal tank they were readying for deployment against the forces of Ndege Mweusi. And so far, The Director had been most impressed by Texas Red's project.

At the moment, they were taking back the teenagers to the Florida base on the jet. Toga had been extremely satisfied to end her posthumous mission with no extra collateral damage and had immediately fallen asleep after take-off.

The real mission began now, Anna knew, and she thought the two deserved some rest. Midoriya was using the sat phone to call his mentor, All Might, and inform him the operation had been successful and they were both safe.

Two weeks of operation. They would have some time for R&R and then deploy in Europe to follow on Pestilentia's leads.

A bit of delay, result of the media coverup, obviously, surrounded the news broadcast of the first target's death. The new headline was completely fabricated; “CEO of multinational company dies in a helicopter crash in Pakistan.”

The article went on to describe how the businessman had been on vacation in Karachi when his vehicle was caught by turbulence and fell.

The only comments doubting the official story suspected terrorists or the Pakistani government. And one or two blaming aliens. Anna snorted at that. It was a bit too much, even in a world as weird as this.

Midoriya had finished the phone call, so he went back to the seat next to Toga. “Good call, kid?” she asked him.

“Yeah! All Might and mom had a great time and got home okay, I told him all that I could about the mission.” All Might was cleared by Texas Red, so they could trust him to keep quiet.

“You should catch some sleep; the flight is rather long.” South Africa to Florida, with a refuelling stop in Morocco, all while avoiding the no-fly zone above Ndege Mweusi's lands.

She checked on the rest of the personnel on the plane: Flight Plan, Anderson, and the pilot. The pilot was doing some routine checks, Flight Plan was reviewing some intel, Anderson was asleep with a facemask on, so strong scents wouldn’t wake her up.

Her fellow agent was a light sleeper, so it helped her get at least a bit of shut eye. Anna could

empathize; her night vision had screwed up her sleep cycle since childhood and she appreciated the opportunity for uninterrupted sleep when possible.

Using her laptop, she checked the status on the rest of the team. Led by Csaba, the team were performing some long-range recon in the Ukrainian border, following a lead by an informer in a local militia. Apparently, the militia had been hired to move a large package by truck and were moving it south in an armoured convoy.

While Midoriya and Toga had hunted down their targets, the team had tracked down the convoy, watched it closely, and even managed to get inside the militia camp one night. Their latest update confirmed it was some kind of bomb, but it emitted no radiation, so at least it wasn't a nuke.

The infiltration team had acquired the manifest, and it had originated in a Russian factory, abandoned twenty years earlier. It was the biggest proof of Pestilentia moving his shadow hand they had ever gotten.

A short break and then once more into the breach, it seemed. Csaba reported he would keep shadowing the bomb and disable it if possible before it reached its destination. Anna was quite pleased with how well her team was performing, even without her leading them.

Girolamo Nazzaro was very used to waiting. His line of work had him travelling all over the world, and one can't be impatient at a plane travelling full speed across the ocean.

He was, however, not in the habit of being kept waiting by self-important bureaucrats, receptionists, or waiters. This particular waiter had taken fifteen minutes to even start approaching to take his order. Nazzaro had almost left the restaurant.

He wasn't meeting any contact tonight and had no reason to stay and be insulted in this manner. "Just give me one of these." Nazzaro said, pointing at the menu.

He wasn't about to validate the sad excuse of a waiter with another word in his language. His Quirk may allow him to learn any language on the planet in matter of minutes, but that didn't mean he liked the nasal tones of this foreign tongue.

Romance languages flowed freely through his lips, but some dialects just left a bad aftertaste.

The waiter left, muttering some derogatory remark about Nazzaro. If the waiter spat on the food, his family might just have a series of cruel accidents. Nazzaro took a deep breath, adjusted a lock of long, white hair that had fallen in front of his eyes, putting the lock behind his ear.

He reached into his briefcase, taking out a leather-bound novel, Moby Dick by Herman Melville. It might be the fourth or fifth time he had read this novel, it felt like an old friend, in a way. He managed to read a few pages, before his phone rang. It was the Ukrainian contact, Zadornov. "Nazzaro here. Speak."

"The box is two days away. All good here."

"Good, then I can enjoy my dinner with peace of mine. Good day to you, Vladimir." He hung up the phone.

Every contact on it was an underling; as Pestilentia's second in command, they all answered to him

first. If the boss contacted him, it was through different, more secure means.

Just two days ago, the boss had asked for a face-to-face meeting. Nazzaro hadn't seen Pestilentia in person in a year, and that had been an emergency meeting after All for One, their ally and partner, had been killed in battle. So, it had to be important.

His food arrived with little delay, redeeming the restaurant in his eyes ever so slightly. The quality wasn't perfect, but it would do. He left quickly, meeting his driver at the entrance and leaving for the hotel.

At midnight he would depart to St. Petersburg, to meet the boss, and a comfortable bed before wouldn't hurt.

The journey itself was uneventful, as thousands of other trips had been in the fifteen years he had worked for Pestilentia. Thinking about the years made him realize his birthday would be soon; a good time to visit mamma and the rest of the family back in Napoli.

A proper plate of pasta would always soothe his soul and give him energy for another year of running the underworld. The driver's third eye was wide open to drive in the dark, the extra photoreceptors enhancing his view and hand-eye coordination.

A non-descript town house in the outskirts was their destination. Arriving just before dawn, Nazzaro ordered the driver to wait and got off the car.

The house had started its life during the reign of the Tsars, then turned into government property for the Soviets, and after the beginning of Quirks and the Cold War had become privately owned again.

The architecture was grand and imposing, and the old KGB sigil still adorned some parts of the structure, as did the family crest of the Krasnov family.

The guard outside the door let him in, and a butler escorted him to the study. The room was extremely old fashioned, elegant, and most inviting.

Sitting on a mighty armchair was a clean-shaven, grey-haired man of average build, with a refined nose, strict eyebrows, and piercing eyes behind sleek glasses. He had a ledger in his hands, the lamp behind him casting shadows across him.

The only thing that hinted at the man having a Quirk was the red colour of his eyes.

"There you are, Girolamo. I trust you are well?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good. Now, I called you here for a reason, as you know. Care to take a guess?"

"The girl murdering our business partners and lackeys?"

"Indeed. Very perceptive, that is why you climbed so high. I'm afraid I had to let those murders happen, any attempt to protect the dead would have only caused more setbacks. As you can see, our plans still move along smoothly anyway. So, allow me to explain who exactly we are dealing with."

He showed Nazzaro the ledger, it had photos of a blonde-haired girl at various stages of childhood. And a recent digital picture, clipped on to the page, showing the same girl, now a teenager, among

All for One´s League of Villains.

“These days she goes by “Himiko Toga”. The dead were people who had fucked with All for One at some point. She was made a sleeper agent for the League and activated by All for One. Why don’t you fetch us some drinks, and I tell you the whole story, put your mind at ease about the situation?”

Nazzaro nodded, and walked over to the kitchen, asking for a bottle of the boss´s favourite and two glasses.

“In my old age I have gotten chatty, Nazzaro. I fear I may even become one of the monologuing villains in time. Anyhow, here´s the whole story behind this…”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading, comments are greatly appreciated!

The Westminster Plot

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Himiko Toga felt her knife break as she struck her enemy, his skin hardening to protect from harm. It made no difference, she knew how to fight these kinds of opponents. From her belt she grabbed her kali batons, one for each hand.

They made little damage, but were fast, nimble, and extended her reach for grappling. She managed to get in close, poked at the enemy´s eyes, and, dropping her right-side baton to grab a backup knife, she jammed it through the man´s ear.

But he wasn't the only one, the ghostly images of fighters circling around her, ready to strike. A young man with a scarred face attacked her with blue flames. A lizard guy tried to cut her in two with a sword made of knives, held together by belts. A sickly man tried to dissolve her with his hands.

They were all familiar. She jumped at the last second out of death hands guy´s attack, and he struck fire guy instead. The screams were horrible. She used her baton to deflect the lizard´s sword into hand guy´s forearms. His hands fell off. A throwing knife in the eye took down the lizard guy.

From the mist emerged more people. These rang a bell a bit more; Toga felt some anger towards them. A brown-haired girl tried to grapple with her but putting herself in distance of the kali sticks gave her a disadvantage. Toga broke the brunette´s wrist, then sliced her throat open.

But the liquid that sprayed her was acid, burning her hand, as a pink skinned girl attacked her. A throwing knife put her down, but Toga´s left hand was burnt badly, and she couldn't hold her baton with it.

A strong woman in a costume with bunny ears jumped at her next, kicking her on the side, knocking out the air in her lungs. Another kick disarmed Toga, and another broke her fingers before she could get a new weapon.

A kick of her own pushed back the rabbit woman, and then she was fighting a green haired teenager. He was familiar "Izu-Izu?" She knew him! But something was off about Izu-Izu, his eyes were not the same. Red eyes were in their place, red eyes with no mercy. Power surged through Izu-Izu´s body, and he punched Toga through the chest.

Toga woke up with a start, shivering, covered in cold sweat.

The London hotel room she shared with Izuku had a controlled climate, and still she felt a cold tingle on her skin. The dream had been horrible, but it was just a dream.

Izu-Izu was on the other bed, he didn't have red eyes, and he wasn't going to punch her to death anytime soon. She pushed the dream away from her mind and decided she´d sleep easier cuddled with her hero.

Removing the covers, she slid in behind Izuku, who was sleeping on his left side. She huddled close, enjoying every second of it. She passed her arm over him and nuzzled her face into his neck, his hair tickling her nose.

She felt an urge to bite his neck. *Maybe when he is awake, he might even like it!* She could feel Izuku´s steady heartbeat through their t-shirts. If she wasn't as sleepy as she was, she´d probably have stayed up and just enjoyed the moment. *Damn you, exhaustion!*

Izuku Midoriya took a drink out of his coffee mug and reviewed the camera surveillance on his tablet one more time. Toga was out, getting food and supplies for the apartment they shared with Holy Diver.

They were supposed to keep a low profile while they looked for more leads, at the moment in Great Britain´s capital city, so Izuku was even more careful than in Florida, where no one looked twice at a green haired tourist. Apparently, the hero Deku was starting to gain renown in Europe, so he went out less.

The CIA agent with them, Flight Plan, had used his drones to get eyes on a few suspicious activities by criminals, and at the moment they were trying to piece together any clues to Pestilentia´s whereabouts.

Izuku knew the villain was as likely to be hiding deep in the wilderness or the countryside as he was to be hiding in plain sight, just as All for One had been in Kamino Ward.

And given the reach of his organization, Midoriya inferred he likely had people with warping Quirks, or Quirks against detection, so it was likely they would not find him easily. Their plan was to catch one of his underbosses and make him talk, and to do that, they had to find one first, and whoever was coordinating their London operations was a good bet.

The camera footage showed close to sixty activities, but three stood out to Izuku: a cargo shipment arriving at the docks, heavily guarded by men armed with weapons illegal in Britain; some sort of big drug deal in an alley; a kidnapping in broad daylight, the victim, a member of Parliament, released a few hours later near the Shard.

What would Sir Nighteye think when seeing this? The kidnapping was probably just a message to the politician, a threat, so its not directly related, but we could look at the kidnappers´ Quirks and start preparing. Four criminals, all were masked and dressed in dark pinstripe suits.

One used a quirk that turned his hands and forearms into rope to restrain the victim. Another appeared to have double articulation on his legs and arms. The other two didn't display active Quirks, but one had eyes glowing green menacingly at the victim.

An offensive Quirk? Maybe like Aizawa-sensei's? With that, he could cross-reference with the other crimes; the glowing eyes man was in the drug deal, apparently as the leader for one side, this time his face was obscured by a hood; the rope arms guy was helping unload cargo at the docks, with no mask this time. "Gotta tell the agents" Izuku mumbled.

The crimes were definitely related, the perps were definitely the same gang, but was there a connection to Pestilentia? The activity was low-profile enough to fit with what Izuku knew about the villain and seemed to move the appropriate amount of money and cargo, as well as the intimidation factor.

Izuku referenced his own notes on the supervillain, taken from what he could find in Hero Network sources and the American's intel. *Quirk: unknown, own speculation suggests mental type Quirk, more information needed to determine whether control or enhancement based, might also be age based.*

Appearance: unknown, inference; either average, or too distinctive to show in public. Age: unknown, suspected to either have average lifespan or enhanced like AfO.

Sphere of Influence: Europe, Middle East, Asian partnership with AfO (terminated in Operation Skywalker), connections in South America, partnership with Villareal Cartel in Mexico.

Little influence in the USA and Canada, Australia and the South Pacific. Expected to have at least one subordinate in each area. Connections to other top villains suspected but unconfirmed.

Based on what they knew, Izuku had little material to plan for a direct confrontation. He suspected a mind-based Quirk or one that allowed him to live longer as an explanation of his criminal influence and the reach of his shadow hand.

But that said nothing about his henchmen. All for One had powerhouses like Dabi, the Nomus and Kurogiri, Overhaul had men like Rappa and Mimic…who knew what Pestilentia could have. At least now they knew three of their guys, and that was something.

He felt a small shift in the air to his right, turning immediately to the source. Toga was just millimetres away, opening a soda. She smiled her crooked grin "Brought ya something to eat, Izu-Izu!" She handed him a fish and chips sandwich and took a seat next to him. "Working on something?"

"Yeah, trying to figure out how to get that Pestilentia guy. Hmm…I think I never asked you if the League knew anything more?"

"Shigaraki knew little, but sure, what would you like to know?"

"I know the approximate size of his operations, but don't have any idea of his underlings or his own Quirk, do you know anything about that?"

"I kinda have a feeling it was something to do with communication, All for One never got any calls on the phone but he told us one or two times they had spoken. And Shigaraki had no contact so he could never talk to him. Maybe telepathy? The underlings…I think once, a guy with white hair visited All for One, but I don't know if he was one of Pestilentia's guys. Any progress on the leads?"

"These three crimes are related; the same guys are there. I think we should find them and capture them, and get them to talk about their boss, and then go up all the way."

"Nice! When do we start kicking asses?" Izuku heard silent walking behind them. *Much louder than Toga? And miss Holy Diver is a trained commando?*

"You can start tonight, kids, the drones caught signs of something big at the Parliament happening sometime in the night at an emergency session called by the Prime Minister."

Shouto Todoroki was channel surfing news broadcasts, hoping to learn about other heroes worldwide and become a better hero himself. After meeting Aoyama´s cousin, the French hero known as the Black Cat during his vacation with Momo, Shouto had been much more curious about heroes outside Japan.

Most news programmes were reporting on the African Quirk War, a growing tragedy that he felt

powerless to stop. If all the power of the United States and its allies wasn't stopping that warlord, a hero sworn to defend Japan wasn't going to be much help. He switched channels, until he found an interesting one:

"Good night, ladies and gentlemen, this is John Wilcox for BBC News, with an emergency news broadcast just outside the Parliament. As far as we know, all MP´s present, as well as Prime Minister Edwards, have been taken hostage by the MP for Croydon North, Alistair Sweeney, along with a band of masked men.

"The MP took the Parliament hostage just twenty minutes ago, police are just now forming a perimeter outside Westminster…Wait, I there´s a commotion from the inside…Officer, has the police made their move?"

A middle-aged officer with a Sikh headdress and a mighty beard answered "That is not one of ours, and no heroes have arrived on scene yet. The criminals may be fighting amongst themselves".

Momo had joined him at the couch, intrigued that he was up this early; their last couple of weeks had been mostly hero work late in the night, and sleeping in the day.

She placed a gentle hand on his shoulder and asked "Shouto, why are you still up? We returned four hours ago from Hosu and you´ve not yet come to bed." "I…just lost track of time, Momo. I´ll be there in a few, this looks important."

"I guess I´ll have to stay so I can drag you when its over, then?" She smiled mischievously.

"Just this news story and you can drag me all the way" Shouto smiled at his girlfriend and then turned back to the broadcast.

"There is definitely something happening inside, it sounds like someone using a powerful Quirk for combat!" One of the Palace's windows, an old and beautiful piece of glasswork, exploded into a thousand pieces, blown away by a green beam of energy and a shockwave of air.

Shouto raised an eyebrow. This was becoming most interesting. He wished Izuku was in Japan to analyse the Quirks used; his insight was always showing new angles on situations that Shouto would have never thought of.

The newscaster turned to the camera again, "The situation has developed from a hostage situation, to a possible fight between the perpetrators. We know the Quirk of apparent ringleader for this terrorist act, Alistair Sweeney, from his medical records, called Close Shave; it allows him to make a straight razor from the iron in his blood, and gives him the steady hands for good shave, apparently.

"We would like to remind the viewers that the usage of Quirks in public without a license is against the law and is punishable by a minimum of five years in prison." Shouto was surprised by that, Japan had pretty strict regulations but that was a pretty big step up.

Behind the couch on the First Response Team's living room, Shouto heard the door open. He looked back to see Uraraka and Tokoyami arriving from an extended investigation in Kamino Ward.

"Hey guys, how did it go?" asked Momo. Shouto nodded as a way to say hello.

"Greetings. My heart is grieved, for we have returned empty-handed. The museum burglar is still at large, and the truth eludes us still." Tokoyami seemed gloomier than normal.

Maybe Shouto could ask him about it when they talked next time, after some rest for everyone. He was no Izuku for helping others with their trouble, but he could always listen to a friend in need. Uraraka just waved lazily and joined them on the couch, slumping next to Momo. “What are you watching?”

“A hostage situation in London, we hope to see the British heroes respond quickly and decisively.” answered Momo. Tokoyami took his leave, heading for his quarters to get some well-deserved rest. Shouto turned back to the broadcast with Momo and Uraraka.

On the background of the reporter, a large door exploded into splinters. “Gavin, stop recording me, record that!” yelled the reporter, and the camera zoomed in on the door.

“Someone's coming out!” said the reporter, as a figure appeared, carrying two people, one on each arm. It looked just like All-Might rescuing the victims at that disaster from the video that had marked Shouto's childhood.

Except for the fact that the medium-height, athletic man was wearing a simple set of black fatigues and a balaclava. There was something very familiar about him, Shouto thought.

Rushing the victims to the police perimeter, the masked man put them down softly, telling the Sikh police chief something in whispers, far away from the camera crew´s microphones.

Then he rushed again inside Westminster. “We have just seen a man emerge from inside, saving the MP´s for Aberdeen and Colchester, is this a vigilante? No British hero wears such an outfit.” The reporter stopped talking as someone else came out.

A short woman wearing SWAT-styled fatigues and a dark grey shemagh headscarf around her face carried a pig-headed man Shouto recognized as the British Prime Minister. He was not exactly as fat as a pig head might suggest, but he was still at least a foot taller, and yet the woman carried him with speed.

“Gavin, we are using that favour with the Police Commandant, follow me!” The camera's picture became shaky as the reporter and his crew got to the police cordon, just a couple meters away from the officers approaching the Prime Minister.

At this distance, they could see woman in the headscarf's eyes. They were a golden hue with tiny flecks of black, green and orange. Around them the woman had applied quite a bit of eyeliner and eyeshadow.

She looked directly at the camera, and Shouto felt a chill run down his spine. Those eyes were very familiar. And then she spoke, confidently addressing the officers and the reporters “We are extracting the wounded, there are just three more, the rest are alright and await our all clear to escape.”

Beside him, Uraraka had made a strangled sound. It took her a few seconds to compose herself, and by the time she spoke, the woman was already running back inside Westminster, a Kali baton in each hand. “That BITCH!!!” yelled Uraraka, waving a fist at the TV.

Shouto knew who she was talking about, it had clicked with the voice, even speaking a different language. And the run back inside, that was definitely how Himiko Toga moved, like a predator after its prey.

The Prime Minister was being interviewed, but it wasn’t the priority anymore. An old enemy, saving lives in a different country? It was bizarre.

But Shouto didn't have time to consider the situation, as the first rescuer came out, two more members of Parliament on his arms and a very small woman, just a few inches taller than Mineta, clinging to his neck.

He put them down with the Paramedics, careful not to hurt them in any way. One of them, a young-looking politician with scaly hair, seemed to have both legs broken, and Shouto thought he could see the signs of a concussion.

It appeared he had fought back. The short woman, who the reporter was just identifying as the Speaker of the House, Bernadette Collins, was bleeding from an abdominal wound into a well-placed bandage. The third MP, an elderly man, clutched his right hand in pain; the bandage around it was completely soaked in blood.

"Watch out!" yelled one of the officers as another window broke into a thousand pieces, a masked man in a bespoke black suit bursting through, a grenade launcher on his right hand. The criminal fired. The cameraman didn't move, he had to be frozen in fear. Shouto held his breath.

Two loud snaps filled the air, and then the explosive was caught in mid-air, exploding in a very small air bubble. The first rescuer held up his hand, his index and middle finger extended as if he had just flicked them.

It is your power! "Oh fuck" muttered Shouto.

"No" whimpered Uraraka. As if that wasn't obvious enough, with a leap, the rescuer caught up with the criminal and kicked him in a very familiar fashion. Shoot Style sent the criminal flying through the air, his left arm flailing in thin, rope-like strands.

The man who was clearly Izuku Midoriya followed, tackling the rope arms man when he got up, taking the fight back inside. It was enough for Shouto, he couldn't see any more.

This was too much to take in, let alone process, and if he tried to do so while sleep deprived it would undoubtedly lead to much suffering. Beside him, Uraraka had grabbed the remote and turned the TV off. "What is happening?" she sobbed "Why was Deku-kun there? Why was SHE there?"

It was all Shouto and Momo could do to give their friend a hug and help her get to bed. They had to contact Izuku soon, they had to know he was alright. But it had to wait, at the moment Shouto felt so frustrated by his friend that he knew he would say something we would regret later.

At 11 A.M. the rest of the team was gathered, waiting for a more detailed briefing about the hostage situation in the Parliament, and any word on Midoriya being involved.

The British news had apparently prepared a special report for their late-night news programme, and so far, it was the most direct source of information, as the British government hadn't given them anything with their request on the hero network. Iida pressed the play button on the recording, starting just before the report.

"…and that is all for the moment in the developing situation in the mountains of northern China. Onto our special report on the deeds that occurred earlier today. From a beginning that screamed of the Guy Fawkes plot to a heroic conclusion, we have the inside scope on the facts.

"From security camera footage, released by the London Metropolitan Police, we have been able to more accurately piece together what transpired. An emergency Parliament meeting started at 9

P.M., at 9:05 MP for Croydon North, Alistair Sweeney, excused himself to the lavatory, taking a briefcase with him.

"He placed the briefcase in some point of the men´s lavatory, where it detonated. The explosives appear to have been organic matter detonated via Quirk, according to Metro Police ballistics specialists, and thus didn't set off alarms. A team of ten masked terrorists emerged from the blast hole, coming out of a sewer and into the Palace of Westminster.

"The criminals split up and subdued the five security guards protecting the emergency meeting's chamber. Three surrendered peacefully, were disarmed and bound with plastic handcuffs, the other two attempted to resist and were grievously injured. Every man and woman in the BBC, we all pray for the guards' survival and recovery.

"The ten terrorists then stormed the chamber, threatening the MPs with illegal weapons and Quirks. They demanded nuclear launch codes, and to speak with the press. At this point, the MP for Aberdeen, Lillian Stronghold, was chosen to make a phone call to the BBC to get the terrorists their demand, but in a show of incredible bravery, the MP called for help immediately, allowing the police to mobilize for action.

"The terrorist leader, a man with a Quirk that allows him to project bright green plasma beams from his eyes, identified under the alias "Elias Shreveport", attacked MP Stronghold, causing third degree burns to her leg.

"By this point, it was 9:15, and the terrorists announced their plan to kill a hostage every five minutes their conditions weren't met. One of the men started beating the Prime Minister, trying to force him to give up the nuclear launch codes. The Police and reporters were still some twelve minutes away.

"At 9.18 P.M., a joint team of SAS operators and MI6 agents used a zipline to cross the street from Jewel Tower, who then rappelled to a window and ambushed the terrorists, taking down one of them in the entrance, and wounding another.

"In the chaos, the MPs for Colchester, Cardiff and the Speaker of the House attempted to fight back, sustaining injuries. The SAS team chased the criminals out of the chamber, with a pair of them fighting against the terrorist known only as Noodle, with a Quirk that allows him to turn his hands and forearms into steel-tipped, variable length cords, and an escaped convict identified as Jared Tataglia, who used a double articulation Quirk to boost his martial arts.

"The two SAS operators quickly beat the criminals and immobilised MP Sweeney, allowing the other MP´s to evacuate and find safety in another room away from the fighting.

"The two SAS rescued the injured MP´s, the Speaker, and the Prime Minister, securing them behind the police cordon, and protected the officers and press from a grenade launcher with an air control Quirk. After reassuring the police, they headed in to fight again.

"Noodle and Tataglia were subdued and captured, along with two others, while the MI6 agents captured the ringleader and one other criminal. The two other terrorists were killed in the crossfire. The identities of the SAS and MI6 operatives are, of course, protected, but we thank them for their timely intervention."

The recording stopped there. Tsuyu spoke first "Wasn't Midoriya doing a course with a hero in the USA? Why was he in London?"

Hatsume answered almost immediately "It is definitely a secret project, maybe a joint operation.

He would have used my babies if he wasn’t hiding his identity!”.

“But why is THAT BITCH there?” Uraraka asked, cold fury in her eyes.

“It didn’t really sound like that Toga person, maybe some secret agency made a clone? Or they brainwashed her?” Hatsume tried to be optimistic, only to be a more direct target to Uraraka's anger. She stopped talking and looked away, fidgeting.

“We'll have to contact Izuku to see what he can tell us. If it is a secret, like Hatsume thinks, he may not be able to give us the answers we want, but we must ask all the same. I'll tell you when I arrange the call.” finished Shouto.

Chapter End Notes

Will the team get a step closer to Pestilentia? Find out in coming chapters! (Changed a guy's Quirk for a righteous Sweeney Todd reference I should have capitalized on!)
Thank you for reading!

Next step of your master plan; a big guy for you

Chapter Notes

> The first fight with real stakes in the story, the battle music that inspired me was:
> Gotham´s Reckoning, The Dark Knight Rises soundtrack
> and Skyline, Halo 3 ODST soundtrack

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Alright, I´ll talk, no need to punch me again!" whimpered the man who called himself "Elias Shreveport" after another kick on the ribs by agent Anderson´s boot. Anderson hummed approvingly, turning to Anna Dobinek and giving a nod. Anna asked, "I guess you have conditions?"

"I´m gonna need to be hooked up to an IV that lets me sleep without dreaming. I don't know how the bosses do it, but they send orders in these very real dreams. So, knock me the fuck out, and I´ll tell you everything I know, deal?"

"Deal, start talking."

"Boss, was that shitshow with the Brits necessary? We don't need nukes" asked Girolamo Nazzaro, seeing the headlines of the plan he had set in motion in London.

"Those assets were expendable, and the result was just what we needed. With a little misdirection, the small squad our buddies sent is right where we want them. Those agents are getting a surprise on the way here." The old man was nothing if not smug.

Anna Dobinek felt the seed of doubt starting to form inside her mind. They knew where Pestilentia ´s top lieutenant met with the supervillain. It felt like it was too easy.

She would have been more at ease if she had her entire team on hand, but things were moving too fast, and the window of opportunity to catch the enemy was closing, and there was no time to wait for the others. It would have to be Anderson, Flight Plan and his two subordinates, Midoriya, Toga and herself. She was an elite soldier, a veteran agent…if anyone was capable of pulling this off, it was her.

The enemy operatives had been turned over to the Brits, an agent named Wallcroft had taken them in to an MI6 facility. They would keep the promise to the terrorist ringleader and keep him knocked out with sedatives.

The jet was ready to depart as soon as they were done handing over the prisoners, and thus they were able to take off quickly, bound for Saint Petersburg, Russia.

Texas Red, when briefed, had arranged for reinforcements to meet them in the airport a few hours after their arrival. The old man had wished her good fortune on the mission “Bring that fucker dead or alive, Dobinek. I have faith in you and I know you can do it. Good luck!”.

A while after take-off, as they crossed into Danish airspace, Anna felt a small turbulence as it hit the plane. Something was doing that, air waves tended to feel differently to her sensitive to vacuum ears. She rose from her seat, waking up Anderson with a gentle shove “Something's off, wake up the kids.”

“Aye aye.” Anna walked to the cabin, where Flight Plan and their pilot sat. “Did you feel that?”

The CIA agent nodded, his sight unfocused as he concentrated on his Quirk, Air Control, the perception of inanimate flying objects. “A signature just moved, a thousand meters above. It is some sort of weather balloon, uncommonly high up. The air around it just shifted in eight directions. Smee, launch the drones!”

At the push of a button, two dozen drones launched from canisters at either side of the cabin, forming a perimeter around the jet three hundred meters wide.

One of the CIA underlings, Karling, brought up the drone cameras; in conjunction with Flight Plan ´s sonar, they could counteract whatever was happening. A second passed, then another. A camera picked up a glint.

Five seconds passed with no contact. A camera made out a shape, seven more cameras caught similar shapes. Black, human sized projectiles. “Incoming! Evasive action, Smee!” ordered Flight Plan. The jet took a sharp turn left, nose diving to the ground.

“Hang on!” yelled the pilot, as he slammed the stick to the side. The jet rolled into two barrel-rolls, throwing the occupants around.

As the plane straightened, Anna clambered up from the floor. She had fallen on her left hand, and now her middle finger was bent unnaturally, causing her a flare of pain. “Oh fuck, I fucked up my finger!”

She looked at the screen with the camera feed; it had been broken in the barrel roll and some feeds were obscured. The silhouettes had shifted their direction and expanded; they were using wingsuits!

The objects zoomed past the cameras in the outer perimeter, they were armoured in black, masked with red glowing eyes. “Masks! Get away from the windows!” yelled Flight Plan as he grabbed his own pressurized mask from the ceiling. Anna imitated him and readied her sidearm, a 9 mm pistol.

There were a couple seconds before the enemy caught up to them, if they didn’t want to die on impact, at least, and she could get in a more advantageous position in the time.

She took a step, then another. Midoriya was placing a mask on Toga's face, who was bleeding from a cut on her forehead. “Mask on! It's a fight!” Anna crouched by a metal container, ready for the attack to start.

Or that was what she thought.

Eight impacts shook the plane, automatic gunfire erupted from the windows and a breaching charge blew away a hole on the side of the jet, sucking the pressurized atmosphere out in an instant, pulling with it one of Flight Plan's subordinates, Chester.

Two armoured men walked into the plane from the blast, rifles sweeping the cabin, firing in Anna's direction. She took cover behind the metal crate, waited for an opening, and sprang up, firing at the enemy operator´s heads.

The bullets bounced on their thick masked helmets, and the red eyes in their masks bore into her head. A hail of bullets fired just to the side, missing by an inch, as Anderson kicked the shooter´s rifle away, got in close, and blew up the man´s knee from behind with her shotgun. The back side of the knee was less armoured for movement, and thus vulnerable to overwhelming force! Using the imbalance to her advantage, Anderson dropkicked the enemy soldier out of the aircraft.

Anna heard two more breaching charges behind her, one coming from the cockpit, but she had no time to react, as the other enemy operator swivelled around to blow Anderson's brain out. Shooting at the armoured mask's eyes, she dove to the floor, sliding beside the man.

The momentary confusion of being shot in the eyes, even if the helmet could take it, allowed Anna to reach out and disconnect the tubes that fed air into the helmet. The soldier collapsed, choking, and Anna pushed him off the plane, yelling on instinct “Yeet!”

Flight Plan flew through the cabin, falling beside Anna. An even larger soldier with bulkier armour emerged from the cockpit just before it separated and plunged to the ground. The plane was completely doomed, they had to fight off these fuckers before the fall killed them all.

Toga was nowhere near fighting shape. She was wearing casual jeans and a t-shirt, and she only had one of her knives on her. And worst of all, she had hit her head when the plane had rolled, and now her vision was blurry, her forehead was bleeding, and she felt nauseous, about ready to puke.

The enemy operators had somehow gotten on the plane, blown up parts of it, and were trying very hard to kill them. Izu-Izu punched one, sending him almost flying, but the fucker anchored his boots, and stayed on the plane, advancing slowly while firing at them.

One for All wasn’t going to save him from being shot in the head! Toga dragged him away from the arc of fire, then vaulted over a seat to kick one of them in the head. The helmet was too hard, and it hurt to kick it. But now she was inside her deadly area, about a meter away from her target's vitals.

She danced around the operator's rifle as he tried to melee with it, getting close and cutting at the wrist, disabling the enemy's hand, and weakening his hold on the rifle.

Her open hand yanked it free and she threw the weapon in the direction of the agents. She moved away, avoiding a very fast series of punches, taking a nightstick from the operator's belt before he had the opportunity to use it, and smacked his head with it.

The operator lifted his right arm to catch the nightstick as it bounced from the helmet. *Just as I thought!* Toga flipped the knife into an ice-pick grip and stabbed through the armpit, a weak spot of any armour. Her knife wasn’t long enough to strike the operator´s heart, but the armpit had the axillary artery, so it was deadly.

She withdrew the knife and stabbed again, and again, and again. With the last of his strength, the man shoved her away, hitting a wall.

Beside her, Izuku had managed to get up close to the operator in front of him and had used One for All to kick through the armour. The operator was lying unconscious, slumped against a seat.

Then one of the agents, Mr. CIA, was thrown across the cabin by a big guy. Mr. CIA clearly wasn't in control right now, and it seemed extremely painful for him. Behind the big guy, the cockpit fell off the airplane. *We are fucked, we need to jump!*

Another explosion tore apart the back end of the plane. Now it was a tube gliding on wings.

Three more soldiers emerged from that side and were engaged by the two agents. Izuku attacked the big guy, kicking him away from the downed Mr. CIA. Sergeant Bitchface walked in to help Izu-Izu, allowing him to get to Toga.

"I don't know how long we have, you have to jump!" He wrapped a parachute around her and drew her in for a hug. "I'll be right behind you. I…I…oh, you know." He pulled her close and kissed her. It felt like forever, but then she was pushed out of the plane by Izuku, and she was opening the parachute.

The plane was falling fast, at this point the atmosphere was breathable, though extremely cold. Below her, farmland extended as far as the eye could see. Toga saw the plane glide for another minute, before two figures leapt out of the plane, followed by two more. *Izu-Izu has to be one of them! He has to be alright!*

A few moments later, the plane crashed into a field, and Toga landed a few hundred meters away. She had to find the Izu-Izu, kill any enemies.

She started running to the wreckage, to a spot where discarded parachutes were blowing in the wind. Her head was throbbing in pain, and the blood from her forehead was blocking her vision. Her eyes were tearing up from the smoke coming out of the wreckage.

She had to find Izu-Izu, nothing else mattered.

Toga saw a silhouette moving, not dressed in black armour, and ran towards it, blinking furiously, trying to see clearly. She managed to open her left eye, after blinking several times, and saw Izuku running towards her. And then, a sharp pain in the back of the head, and she felt herself falling into darkness.

Izuku Midoriya awoke with a start as icy water was poured on him. *Where am I? What happened?* The last thing he remembered was the big soldier grabbing him on a headlock and jumping off the plane, managing to break free and running off to find Himiko.

After that…maybe the sting of a dart? He'd been hit with a tranq dart, but was that all it had been? Izuku flexed his hand, moving the power of One for All around. *Not a Quirk-killer, good.*

"If you are finished testing your Quirk and trying to find ways to escape, you might want to look around, Izuku Midoriya. Or is it Midoriya Izuku? I never seem to get it right."

Izuku looked around, he was tied to a chair in the middle of a circular room, brightly lit from ceiling lights, the walls covered in white screens. The man who had spoken was a tall, slender man with white hair. A man wearing camouflage and a balaclava stood beside the speaker, holding an empty metal bucket, a rifle slung on his back.

"The boss wanted to see you personally, so I thought we would make you a bit more presentable. After that little incident with the plane you positively reeked of smoke and blood." The man was

ridiculously smug.

“Aren’t you gonna thank us for that fresh shower? They say they are healthy for young people. Anyway, I'm glad to make your acquaintance. Girolamo Nazzaro, at your service. The golden child of the Sicilian Mafia, officially killed in an accident, now top agent of Pestilentia. I would allow you to shake my hand, but the micro bots on your ties might act up, realign, and sever your hands and feet.”

Izuku didn’t like that idea; he had trained very hard to master One for All and not blow out his limbs, he wasn’t about to lose them to some temperamental handcuffs. *I guess I have to play along for now, this man doesn’t seem a threat for now.* “A pleasure to meet you, then. You already knew my name; may I ask how?”

“The boss knew, and he told me. I didn’t think our humble organization would be noticed in Japan, young Izuku. Is your involvement related to your history with All for One? The boss will probably ask you more, they were quite well acquainted. I'm just a bit curious.”

This confirms what we thought about them having an alliance. Maybe I can get him to talk more and use it when I escape! “In a way. They did ask for me, but it was only partly for that, it was mostly related to personal reasons.”

“Speaking of, you're about to ask about the Toga girl, yes? Worry not, Izuku, we have her safe and sound. Not a single one of her ugly, badly cared for hairs was harmed, but the tranquilizers were calibrated for you, so she will be sleeping for a few hours more, maybe the entire day.

"But the boss will talk your ear off about that, so I will just change subjects. How did you feel about the performance of the men who attacked the plane, objectively?”

“Those men killed people I lived with for a month and a half! How can you even ask that?”

“Hmm, I guess I didn’t consider that. They were a loan from the Mountain Brigade…you do keep up with the news, don’t you, Izuku? Those eight men likely have the blood of some two thousand Quirked people on their hands. Neat, isn’t it? I imagine that if I had been born Quirkless, I might have ended up a bit like that, I have a lot of anger and hatred in me, you see. And with a passional reason to kill, it would have been a sure thing.”

The men being part of the Mountain Brigade made a lot of sense now. Izuku knew they used technology and ruthless tactics to augment themselves and be able to fight on equal ground with people with Quirks.

He felt proud in retrospect that, even in his worst days as a Quirkless boy, he had never thought about harming others because they did have Quirks; the Mountain Brigade was anxious to torture and kill just for that difference.

He looked again at this man; the Mafioso, perfectly well dressed, smug and arrogant, looking down at him as if he knew some sort of gossip about him, but beyond that, there was a dangerous edge in his gaze. The same kind that lingered in Toga's eyes in a fight. A killer's eyes.

Izuku thought about the Mountain Brigade soldier he had knocked out…the soldier had still been on the plane with his bigger companion had grabbed Izuku and jumped.

Had he died? Because of Izuku? He felt his breath quicken, and tears threatened to flow. The man was probably a monster, a remorseless killer and torturer, and would have killed him without hesitation.

But could Izuku still call himself a hero if he had caused a person to die? He needed time to think, a safe place to lay down and just think. He needed…

"Hey, young Izuku, I asked you a question. I do not like to repeat myself, but you have been polite so far, so I can forgive your lack of attention. I said, “Are you feeling sleepy?” So, are you?”

“No, why would you ask that?”

“The boss is ready for you, and I mislike seeing people getting injected. On other circumstances, I might offer you to play some binaural beats on the speakers, or some soft music, but alas, I never keep the boss waiting. The syringe please, Genaro.”

The man with the bucket put on a pair of surgical gloves and cleaned Izuku´s bicep with a cotton ball infused with medicinal alcohol. The guard, apparently called Genaro, withdrew a small syringe, tapped twice on it with his index finger, squirted a millilitre of the liquid to get any air pockets out of the needle, and inserted it into Izuku's arm.

The Mafioso had walked over and leaned in close to say “After your meeting, the real fun begins. I won't spoil our fun plans, but rest assured, Izuku, we will all enjoy your stay here with us.” Every word felt slower and Izuku fought to keep his eyes open. He couldn’t face a supervillain when drugged! He had to fight it, he had to stay awake. He had to…

Chapter End Notes

As always, thanks for reading! The next few chapters will be up soon!

The Okinawa Dream

Chapter Notes

> I suggest any version of Time from the movie Inception, by Hans Zimmer, as the mood for this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku awoke in a worn-out school classroom. Was this his…middle school? It looked like no-one had been here in years, maybe decades. The windows were broken, letting a heavy fog in, obscuring the wooden floorboards.

He looked at his hands; they were still scarred, still strong. He hadn't just dreamt up four years of his life. And the fingers moved accurately. This wasn't like a dream, it was real. He brought One for All out, testing it with a finger snap at 2%, warping Kacchan´s old desk into a bowl. Whatever this was, he wasn't defenceless.

A moment earlier he had been a prisoner of Pestilentia´s group, now he was in this…ruins?

He walked along the corridors of the school, old memories of Kacchan resurfacing. All that abuse…they had worked out their issues, but the damage was done. His self-esteem had been pretty much built back up from scratch by All Might, Aizawa-sensei and his friends, he had grown a lot indeed in the end.

The school was abandoned, and he felt compelled to leave, to go home. He didn't know why, it was like a suggestion said in his own voice, but with words he hadn't thought himself. Outside, the city was even greyer than the dusty school.

The buildings looked completely derelict, and some were falling to pieces. Rusty wreckage filled the streets, cars long corroded into steel skeletons. Despair and fear started to overwhelm Izuku. What was this place? Was this really his old school, his home? What was going on? Was this a Quirk? Had the city been destroyed by villains?

In instants Izuku was running, his legs powered by One for All. He needed to go home. If he could get home, it would all be alright. This apocalypse could never have reached his home!

He was at the door before he could think about the path he had taken. He kicked the door down and headed for the kitchen. It was filled with his mother´s cooking utensils, and some ingredients were even out, turning to dust before his eyes.

Inko Midoriya was not there. Izuku checked the rooms frantically, he just needed his mom to be alright, everything else didn't matter. The study was empty. The living room was empty. The bathrooms were empty. Mom´s room was empty.

The only room left was his own. He barged in, tears blinding him. There was no one there. Only a skeleton on the floor, its hands on its face, as if it had been crying. The skeleton was short, and the bone structure told him it had belonged to a woman. Izuku approached it "Mom? Mom!"

The skeleton crumbled.

A hand touched his shoulder, and a voice whispered into his ear “I´m afraid that needed to happen, young Midoriya. I would tell you it was painless, but that would be a lie.”

Izuku had never felt such anger in his life. His mother was dead, a skeleton crumbled to dust before his eyes, and this person was telling him it had been painful. He had only one way to react. Izuku punched, turning around, using 100% of One for All.

The punch did not catch its target.

There was no one there. The only thing moving was the wall, collapsing, along with the roof of the side of the house he had just punched.

“Now I know how you react. I am pleased my prediction was accurate. Turn around, Midoriya.” He turned, fists ready to destroy the person.

He found himself facing a dark silhouette, somewhat reminiscent of Kurogiri, except perhaps even blurrier, vaguer. He could only tell it was human shaped, and taller than him, about 1.90 meters tall.

The figure waved its hand, and the room shifted, becoming a windswept grassland, extending flatly as far as the eye could see.

“I didn’t kill your mother or nuke your home and leave it like that for a hundred and fifty years. What I did was use my Quirk. As far as I know, you are quite the expert on Quirks, so I would like to know your theories. I am, obviously, Pestilentia, or at least, the part that can speak with you right now. Go ahead and tell me your ideas.”

Izuku lowered his hands slightly. He needed to buy time, let the villain think he had the upper hand, and then he could strike. “I had thought of it being some sort of telepathy, based on the absence of phone records. I had thought about enhanced intelligence, or a Quirk that slowed aging, to explain the size of your organization, and its efficiency. I had thought of mind control, and now I ´m almost sure that is the correct one.”

“Nicely guessed. Since it is a rare pleasure to talk with someone who is not a complete imbecile, I shall tell you exactly how it works. When a person absorbs a pheromone I secrete, either through liquid form or released in a mist, the pheromones attach themselves to the person´s brain, forming a link between my mind and the person´s.

“The pheromones convert proteins in a few areas of the brain allowing me to do a few things with my victims´ brains. I can use simple suggestion, making the person affected quite susceptible; combined with traditional brainwashing, it can turn anyone into a sleeper agent for me.

"With one of the proteins the pheromones produce in the victim´s brain, I can interact directly. On a conscious brain, the effect is rather subtle. You felt the need to come home a few moments ago, didn’t you? That is the kind of thing I mean. But the thing is, on an unconscious mind, it allows me to accelerate the sleep cycle, getting REM sleep in as little as a minute. You do know what Rapid Eye Movement is, don’t you?”

Izuku nodded, Toga had told him a bit about it when she had decided to stop her nightmares as much as possible. “And in REM sleep, dreams happen. The difference between lucid dreams and normal dreams is how much of the brain is awake, and I have my little friends lighting up every synapse at my will.

“Effectively, I control the dream. And everything in it. I can only control one person at a time, and the pheromones will die within a year if not used, so it isn’t useful to control too many people. And even if all this is happening at the speed of thought, I can only keep it up for a finite amount of time before the Quirk strains my abilities. Now, I can´t just "read" memories, but I can trigger them to appear as the dream, so I will have a peak, if you don’t mind. Oh, you do mind? More´s the pity.”

Izuku was standing among a group of heroes, the first to arrive to help in Okinawa. A group of terrorists had unleashed a wind pressure bomb by accident as they transported it to Taiwan, where they were planning to cause massive destruction.

The islands of Taketomi, Ishigaki, Tarama, Yonaguni and Miyakojima had suffered extensive damage by the wind blast and had become the eye of what had evolved into the largest typhoon in years. Wind currents had carried it to Japan, and Izuku could see the true force of nature, stirred by mankind´s hubris.

The typhoon was massive, stronger than any villain, deadlier than anything he had ever faced. Around him stood his team; Todoroki, Iida, Ochako, Yaoyorozu, and Tsuyu, ready to help. Using an exoskeleton, Mei was already helping JSDF soldiers carry crates and pallets of supplies for the civilians.

The other teams on scene included the Shiketsu Squad, two groups from B Class, and about fifty other assorted heroes. The coordinator was a JSDF Colonel, Colonel Shinatose, a veteran of many relief efforts.

“Midoriya, your team will link up with an American team and evacuate the civilians on your Area of Responsibility to their airfield. The storm winds will reach us in four hours, the typhoon proper in five. Citizens were already told what to do, so we expect an orderly evac. You will help direct them, and rescue anyone trapped. Now go! Next one, Kendo, you take your team to the hotels by the beach…”

Izuku and his team were already moving, Todoroki and Iida taking point. The American airfield was a few miles away, and they had to take into account the time.

Followed by a group of Marines in rescue helmets, the heroes went building by building, directing the civilians to the airbase. Hundreds of civilians moved orderly and quickly to safety, but a few panicked, or were unable to get there on their own, so the heroes helped to get them on the way.

The area was quite large, and Izuku was quite proud that they had been given such a large responsibility. He still felt he had let everyone down when All for One had escaped, even if most of the villains had been captured, so it was good to be acknowledged as a capable hero.

And this gave him something to concentrate on that wasn’t the AfO investigation, which was threatening to drive him insane.

After about three hours, they started feeling the storm winds. The wind speed was much faster than predicted, and it was already starting to cause chaos. They needed to work faster to get the civvies away safely!

They were evacuating a school when the rain started, along with even stronger winds. The children could barely keep themselves from being blown away by the wind. Getting them on the bus to the base was very challenging; Momo had to make lead weights for the kids to stay grounded.

No more planes would leave Okinawa, the civilians would have to wait it out in the shelters.

As the storm advanced, meter by meter, the rain intensified, and the winds blew with more power. Uraraka was forced to avoid using her Quirk for the sheer danger of floating objects getting caught in the gale, Momo had to keep a strong grip on any object made to avoid having shrapnel flying around.

Shouto could only use very compact ice; flying shards could easily kill at the current windspeed. Even Iida couldn't run fast enough into the wind. Still they went, making sure every building was secure in the zone.

One last block of buildings remained, a set of old apartments mostly made of wood and brick foundations. The buildings were starting to buckle under the winds, so they split up to cover the most ground. Izuku and Tsuyu took the building in worst shape.

It seemed the oldest, made of the cheapest materials. The doors barely resisted a kick, and soon the heroes were running room to room to check for civilians they found a few families, and carried them outside, to the nearest building made of concrete.

The building was falling apart quickly, and a wooden beam fell between Tsuyu and Izuku as they reached for the last rooms. "Just go! I got this!" yelled Izuku.

The last floor was empty on all the rooms he had checked. One remained, and just in time; the structure was getting weaker by the second. He kicked the last door and found someone he didn't expect to see ever again.

"Himiko Toga!" Izuku put up his hands, ready to fight. Toga's eyes were confused for a second, then she smiled, blushing, as she stabbed the air with a knife. "Izuku-kun! Killing you just as the typhoon kills me will be the best death ever!"

The knife was alive in her hands, fast as a snake, and even deadlier. A slash here, a stab there…it took all of Izuku´s speed to stay alive.

"Just let me kill you! Let me prove you that I love you!"

Izuku managed to catch her wrist and disarm her, just as the floor collapsed. Instinctively, he grabbed Toga and shielded her with his body as they fell. The floor below as cracked and brittle, and it broke on impact. Izuku felt his ribs catch the blow, but he couldn't do anything, as they kept falling.

A wooden trapdoor broke beneath his left shoulder, with quite a bit of pain, and then he hit a concrete floor. The fall had knocked the air out of his lungs, and he was sure some bones were broken. He still held Toga, whose knife was nowhere to be seen; in the fall it had been lost.

Above them, the remaining support beams were splintering and bending. With a series of cracks, the beams broke, and the building started to fall on them.

"Watch out!" yelled Toga, as she pushed Izuku out of the way of the falling debris.

Floorboards, broken beams and an old wardrobe blocked the trapdoor. Directly underneath it was Toga, held in place by a half-inch wide splinter impaling her left leg.

In an instant Izuku was at her side, the instinct to help overriding his self-preservation, making him ignore the fact she had just tried to kill him seconds ago.

Toga stared at her leg in shock, the adrenalin still kept her from feeling the worst of the pain. “Oh, hey, I didn’t have that before.” She looked pale and nauseous.

“I think it didn’t hit a vein, we can remove the splinter and you are going to be alright. I am here, and you are going to be alright.”

Her gaze was full of confusion “Why are you helping me?”.

Izuku didn’t hesitate as he answered “Because that's what heroes do. I am going to break the splinter, so we can move you over there, okay? I need you to hold the stick steady, so it doesn’t move and hurt you.”

“Okay, I´m ready. Do it.”

Izuku grabbed the splinter a few inches above her leg and snapped it as carefully as he could. Toga winced, but she just motioned to the other end of the splinter. Izuku snapped it with even more care, and lifted Toga so she could hop away from the blocked entrance.

“Okay, now don’t put any weight on that leg. I'm going to sit you down over there, alright?” Toga nodded weakly, and limply sat down, aided by Izuku. Some light still made its way through the rubble, but away from it, this basement was pitch dark, so Izuku broke a chemlight, lighting the gloom in an orange hue.

Using the light, he looked around, finding himself in a veritable survivalist bunker, filled with Meals Ready to Eat, emergency supplies and gallons of potable water.

If weapons were readily available in Japan, he was sure he would have found at least thirty different guns. He grabbed the nearest first aid kit, a full back pack that included some basic surgery equipment and returned beside Toga.

“Izuku, what happened? Are you alright? The storm is getting worse!” in his earpiece came the muffled words of Todoroki.

“I'm okay, Shouto, but I am trapped, and a civilian here needs first aid. I have supplies to last until you are able to come and get me out, you don’t have to worry about me. You should evacuate now!”

“Izuku…I…alright. We´ll be here as soon as we can. Stay safe, brother.”

“Why did you say I was a civilian? I am a wanted villain!” Toga was even more puzzled now.

“If I had told them you were here they might have wanted to capture you instead of getting to safety. And you are hurt, so I don’t care about you being a villain, I'm going to help you!”

Izuku placed a hand on her shoulder gently. “Now let’s take that splinter off and disinfect it.” Izuku looked at the wound more closely, using his cell phone flashlight. If he wanted to get the splinter out without causing more harm, he had to do so smoothly, and in the correct direction.

“I'm going to pull it upwards. I need you to hold your thigh with your right hand, and with your left I want you to squeeze my free hand for the pain, okay?”

“Yes, just do it.”

Izuku pulled on the splinter in one smooth move, removing it completely, as Toga squeezed his hand, hard. She let out her breath after it was done. “I´ve never had a thing stuck like that, Izuku-

kun, just normal stabs."

"No stabbing is normal, Toga." Izuku told her with concern. "I'm going to clean the wound now, this will hurt, so same plan with the hand." Izuku grabbed medicinal alcohol from the first aid kit and poured into the wound.

"FUCK, it burns!" Toga grasped his hand even harder. The blood washed with the alcohol, and he cleaned it with some cotton. "To close it I will use this glue EMTs use instead of stitches nowadays, it doesn't hurt but it may be a little cold. There, both sides done. Now I will bandage it to keep it clean, and I will get you some water."

Between sips of water, Toga asked "Why are you so GOOD? Is it your Quirk or is it from your family or do they teach that in UA?"

"I just want to be the best hero I can, for all the people that have been there for me. I kind of feel the…uh…the need to help? I want to save people, I wanted even when I didn't have a Quirk." *Oh no!* Why had he just said that?

"You didn't have a Quirk and you still want to help others? Didn't they bully you? Wasn't Bakugou abusing you?"

"How did you know that?" He was more intrigued than creeped out.

"After I met you I wanted to learn everything about you, be like you, so I researched, I am good at it. Is that creepy? I guess I never really thought about it being creepy? Anyway, I wanted to kill Bakugou very much! He was such a douche!" She pouted in a weirdly cute way.

"We uh…are talking about it. We are not friends yet, but maybe someday."

"You are too good for this world, I want to kill you."

"Why…why do you want to kill me?"

"I…huh. I just feel I want to? Do you ever get weird thoughts out of nowhere? Just telling you things? With your own voice and all?" Now this was getting very strange.

"I think of that even when I don't want to. I just look at a picture of you being super cute and hot and part of me thinks that, but then I start thinking I want to stab you and drink your blood. I mean, it tastes really delicious, but I don't know what makes me think that?"

"Toga, this is very strange, I had never heard of something like that, random thoughts don't usually command people to kill others, and are not that insistent."

"But people do get weird thoughts?"

Yeah, like how I just caught myself thinking you look really cute in this light. "Uhhh…sure, everyone has them!"

"I guess I should think about…hehehe, think about the thoughts."

Izuku scratched his neck nervously, and then had an idea "Are you hungry? I'll go find some food?"

"Sure, I would love to eat!"

Izuku grabbed some cans of food and MRE's; he wanted Toga to be able to pick something she

liked, not just feed her whatever. “Here, we can set up this little stove and heat the food, which do you want?”

Toga picked up a canned stew and they lit the camp stove, quickly heating both their meals. “I think maybe it’s the blood loss speaking, but I kind of like not fighting with you…is that weird?”

“I prefer not fighting you, too. Why are you even a villain anyway? I mean, Shigaraki had his plan of killing All Might, Overhaul wanted to end Quirks…why did you choose that?”

“My Quirk is evil, everyone says so, and it ended up becoming impossible to live with it. I started listening to myself, I wanted to kill them! I wanted their blood! I wanted their identities, their dreams! I wanted to live as someone else, even if it was for only a short time…but it was never enough." She sighed.

"I could never get enough blood to live as anyone else, or they discovered me, or the cops found me. I was almost ready to give up, and then I heard about Stain. He wanted to change society! I wanted to be just like that, I wanted to have a society that let me live as myself, I wanted to be like Stain so much I started to want to kill him.

"It would have been so easy, I thought. He was working with the League of Villains, so I could join, I could drug him, keep him in a basement, take his blood every day, I could be Stain forever!

“But I joined too late. Then, those killers and psychos started just…showing their human sides, I guess? And I felt I had a family for the first time. I don’t remember my family at all, maybe I'm an orphan or they just never cared, I tried to look for them one time and I found nothing.

"Maybe they died? So, the villains became my family. I never thought I could be loyal to anyone but myself, and they earned it so much. I would have died for any of them, I guess that’s why I stayed, even if I didn’t really think we would make a society that would ever accept me.” Her face had gone from calm, to passionate when talking about Stain, to tender as she spoke of the League, to a very sad tone in the end.

“I guess I am alone again, and this time I have no idea what I can do. I…I really wanted you to kill me back there, in the moment. And anyone else would probably have killed me, or at least let me die in the rubble.

“A wanted criminal, a deadly villain, found dead after a building falls on her…if you had seen that in the news, would you have been happy? Relieved? I know you said you would never kill anyone, but an accident killing me would have taken a weight off your back, no?

"Not having a crazy girl obsessed with you who has told you to your face that she wants to kill you. I…I wish I hadn’t seen you here. I wish I had never met you! It was always so easy but with you...it is all so confusing!” Toga broke down in tears, sobbing into the torn, ragged sweater she was wearing.

Izuku didn’t know what to do. If it had been anyone else, he might have known how to comfort them, but Toga…she was right, in a way. He could tell himself he wished no harm on anyone ever, but he would have slept better at night knowing she was gone.

He felt evil just thinking that.

It was also the first time he had heard her version of the story, and he couldn’t help but empathize. He couldn’t help but wonder about what had made her life so terrible that becoming a villain had been the better choice.

Izuku was conflicted. Could he forgive her crimes because he knew she was also a victim? Could he still see the best parts of a person who had done so much wrong? He just stopped thinking, and let his instincts decide.

Toga recoiled at the hand he placed on her shoulder, her eyes frightened, looking like a dog kicked for years by its owner when a new person approaches.

He pulled her in for a hug, knowing full well he was exposing himself for any hidden weapon she might have, allowing her the freedom of biting him with her fangs, of doing any underhanded trick.

She returned the hug, as if she was clinging for dear life. Izuku felt her shake in his arms as she sobbed. At some point, the tears stopped, and she stayed in the embrace for a while.

When she separated, it was like looking at a completely different person. The Himiko Toga he had fought was cheery, enthusiastic, quite creepy, but still somehow cute and attractive; the girl in front of him looked broken, dead inside, lost. It broke his heart to see her like that, villain or not.

She looked at her hands, turning them around, pausing to look at her wrists. “I don’t know what I'm going to do, Izuku. The only thing I have left is what I feel for you. I wanted you, I wanted you beside me, I wanted to be a normal girl, I wanted you to like me, I wanted you to like me as much as I like you." She looked away.

:I wanted to kiss you, and hug you, and hold your hand, and see movies, and cuddle. But I'm a monster, you would never want to do that with me. I would have gone so far to do that, I would have taken anyone's face. Your friend Ochako, the frog girl, a total stranger. And my head just kept screaming on and on and on and on to hurt you, to kill you, saying that if I really liked you I should steal your face! Is that really me?” She sighed.

“I don’t even know what to say, Toga, this is the first time I've heard your side of things, and I can't help it...I want to help you. I think talking about this is a good first step. Do you even want to be a villain anymore?”

She hesitated for a moment, looking away, deep in thought. “No, I don’t want anything anymore. I just want you, but why would you even want to be my friend, let alone my boyfriend?”

“Maybe if I knew you better we could be friends?” Toga's eyes lit up in pure happiness.

“I've become friends with very different people, and as a hero student I believe everyone has a bit of good inside. If you want to become good, I can help you. If you turn yourself over to the police they can help you with the voice that tells you to kill; I can help with the police, so they'll treat you well, Tsukauchi owes me a couple favours…”

She looked like she was about to cry again, this time out of joy. “If I…if I turn myself in, will you visit me?”

Izuku took her hand and answered softly, “I will, I promise.” Toga squealed in delight and kissed Izuku, and for some reason he couldn’t even know, he returned the kiss.

They were both very clumsy, and Toga's little fangs bit Izuku´s lower lip a little. It lasted just a moment. Izuku couldn’t help but smile, he had just had his first kiss! With a pretty girl! A wanted criminal and villain, but still a cute girl!

Toga froze in front of him, and Izuku felt himself leaving his body. He could see himself,

completely still, not even breathing. “What is it, never had an out of body experience before? Best dreams start like this, sometimes.” It was the disembodied voice of Pestilentia, whispering directly into his ears.

“This memory told me quite a bit. Did you realize at any point you were not actually in control, but were rather…how can we say this…a camera, watching in first person?”

Izuku knew the answer was a no. He hadn’t stopped a second to think about anything, the whole situation had played exactly as it had in real life, until he had been pulled out from his body.

“It’s a weakness of memory dreams; if the dreamer catches on, they can see just how limited the dreamscape is. Walk five steps to any side, beyond the walls in this room, and its just a blank space. I'm sure by now you have thought up ten ways a Quirk like mine could be used for good, haven’t you?”

“I have.”

“Do tell, young Midoriya.”

“You could work as a detective, or a therapist, finding out ways to help people deal with trauma. You could help people with PTSD fight nightmares. A Quirk like that could do so much good…”

“But I will never use it for that, is what you think? Well, I offer you a deal. Since you got much closer to catching me than any hero in the last, hmm…five years? Helm Ultra disappeared how long ago?”

Izuku knew and was filled with dread; Helm Ultra was Britain's number 1 hero, and after disappearing for six months, had been found dead in a lake in Canada.

“It was four years ago…you did that?”

“I had no use for him anymore, and in the end, he begged for death. I can give that mercy, yes. My deal, then. I will tell you one of two: my own story, with motivations, crimes and all, or young miss Toga's, and I know it all. Make your choice, and if I'm feeling merciful by the moment story time is over, I might just let you wake up again.”

Izuku knew he had no power here, but he knew what he had to ask, to confirm every theory going through his mind at light speed. “Tell me about Toga.”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!

Call of Division

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Shouto Todoroki was in shock after getting the call. An old American hero had told them, on All Might´s insistence, about Izuku´s plane being shot down over Denmark, and that they had not been able to find him in the wreckage or contact him in anyway.

The American hadn't mentioned Himiko Toga at all, until Uraraka interrupted the conference call "What about Himiko Toga, why was she with Deku? Why is that…that bitch galivanting free around the world?"

The American had sighed heavily, and said "Lass, I'm only calling you as a favour to All Might. I have no obligation to answer any of your questions, not the least while I'm supposed to be writing condolences to four families and get my team in to rescue Midoriya. If it gives you any peace of mind, I assure you that Toga is our prisoner, and was cleared to operate. If at any point she had become a threat, we would have put her down, like a horse with a broken leg, and at this point her tracker is our best shot of getting Izuku alive."

Shouto then had said "Please tell us when you get our friend. We need to know. And if we can help, we are ready." The American had thanked him for the offer, but they were already dealing with the situation.

Shouto managed to hold his composure just long enough to fall on the couch. This couldn't be happening, Midoriya was a strong hero and was even stronger as a person. The thought of him dying was impossible.

And the thought of him dying in some field half a world away, alone except for a psychotic villain…it almost hurt to think that.

Shouto felt tears stream down his cheeks, the sounds around him becoming muffled. He could almost distinguish Uraraka crying in Iida's arms, and some unintelligible sounds preceded a tight, warm hug.

Was that Momo? He couldn't tell. He closed his eyes and he could almost see Izuku, lifeless on the ground, killed in a cowardly attack. He was on the ground, just as Touya had been after the fight at Tartarus, but Izuku didn't move, he didn't speak. Blood flowed.

Shouto opened his eyes. Izuku was more than a friend, he was a brother, and he wasn't going to let him suffer.

He wiped his eyes with determination, looking around. Momo was beside him, holding him in a soothing way. He caressed her cheek and looked into her worried eyes

"Izuku will be alright, he is the toughest person I know. He wouldn't want us breaking apart for him." Momo smiled softly.

Elsewhere, Uraraka and Tsuyu still cried, while Tokoyami and Iida sobbed more quietly.

Hatsume idly looked at a wrench, her eyes watery, muttering softly to herself. She looked so lost, Shouto thought. He managed to catch only a small part of the muttering "I should have told him" She then ran off the room, and they could hear the sounds of her destroying her own machines in

anger. Even that quieted down, and from the workshop they could faintly hear her crying.

Shouto himself was just a second away from crying his eyes out again, but he felt the other sneeded someone to be strong in this moment. It would have to be him. He hugged Momo tightly, patting her back softly. They would all be alright, and he knew Izuku could make it out of anything. Then the phone rang again.

“This is Shouto, from First Response Team, what can we help you with?” he tried to keep his voice neutral, if the person on the other side needed help, they would have to act, heroes had little time to figure out their emotions.

“This is Grigori, translator for the VDV Spetsnaz, under Commander Leonid Nabokov.” The voice spoke English with a heavy accent.

“Our team is on exercise on Denmark, and we captured a wanted criminal from Japan. This “Himiko Toga” walked into a live fire training, and we almost shot her. The commander thought calling hero teams a good idea, can you pick her up here in Denmark?”

Before Shouto could answer, Uraraka had snatched the phone from his hands “We'll go, we'll leave immediately.”

“The nearest city is Roskilde, the VDV can sort things out with your government while you come here. Dosvidanya.” The soldier hung up.

Uraraka looked at Shouto with a glare that would have frightened Bakugou “I'm going to hurt her for putting Deku in danger, and we are getting him back.”

Iida tried to intervene, saying “Uraraka-chan, Midoriya was working with the Americans, why would the Russians call just after that? This is very suspicious!”

Tsuyu added “I think this could be a trap, Ochako-chan, we don’t actually know those were real soldiers…”

“If they weren’t how could they know Toga was there? Prank callers wouldn’t be calling on a foreign military number, Tsuyu!”

Behind them, the door slammed open, Hatsume entering with a determined expression, her clothes covered in machine oil and a bit of her own blood on her knuckles.

“If there is the slightest chance that can help us get Izuku, we are doing it. The VTOL is ready, let's just go. If we find the Americans, they can help too. I just want my first friend back, I need him safe, so lets just go, okay?”

The other could only nod; they had never seen Hatsume so emotional about a person before. In a few moments, they were already seated inside the *Mei*'s passenger area, their support items packed in front of them, hero suits on.

They were getting their friend back, it didn’t matter who they would have to work with.

Girolamo Nazzaro put the sat phone down, a smile on his lips as he looked at his captive. “Faking accents is such a waste of talent, wouldn’t you say, as a fellow student of language?”

Himiko Toga glared daggers at him but couldn't answer with duct tape on her mouth.

"Of course, we can't just let you speak too much, can we? You can answer yes or no questions by nodding and shaking your head, anyway. So…why was that second person on the phone that angry at you? Did you kill any of her friends?"

He smiled at his own cleverness "You stole her boyfriend?" he let out a loud laugh as she actually nodded. "Well congratulations on that. The lucky lad is the one on the other room? Lights please, Daletski."

The glass wall of the holding area turned from brightly lit white light into clear glass. Beyond, the green haired boy, Midoriya, was slumped on his chair, bound by completely average handcuffs and chains.

The bluff had been for laughs; the actual safeguard for Nazzaro's safety was the quick aim of the soldier with him, Giacomo Genaro, one of his own men from the Mafia.

His Quirk increased his reflexes by 20% while focused, and in stressful situations, like a super-strong teenager trying to beat you to death, he was probably the most cool-headed man Nazzaro knew. A well placed tranq shot would be enough.

Toga gasped through the duct tape as she saw the boy, squirming in the chair she was bound to. "He's speaking with the boss, that bring any memories? You at least remember me, little one? Did I get old? Please tell me I don't look old…Nod if I look old."

She nodded mockingly.

"I'm only thirty-five! And you are still the same little brat. But no memories?"

She shook her head. "Well, that was a bluff, actually. I never met you, the boss had to tell me your story with pictures and everything."

She looked confused. "But let's change subjects again. Those heroes are coming to Denmark to get you to Japan, to live in a dark hole till the end of time. And that is if we don't play up their well-known grudge against you. Their psych profiles are filled to the brim with little things, some pretty hard to dig. Our hackers deserve a medal, some of that gossip is rather spicy."

He took out his phone and showed him some detailed files on Midoriya's teammates, "This one, Urara-whatever, will kill you in a ditch the moment the others turn around. This other one, May something, will probably torture you with her gadgets first.

"The guys are just as likely to turn you over as they are to off you themselves, this Lida one is kind of emotional. Oh wait, that is two "I"´s, how quaint. How do we play this, Toga? We just give you over in some twelve hours? We release you, smear ourselves in fake blood and give them a hunting target? I'm partial to the second one, the Spetsnaz uniform got quite bloody when I acquired it. And full-face helmets are always in season."

The guard in the room, Daletski, approached to whisper "Sir, one of the observation posts went quiet, recon suggests going dark mode."

"The Mountain Brigade found no survivors, the Americans can't be that fast, and these heroes are leaving Japan as we speak, who the fuck is it?"

Anna Dobinek, Holy Diver, cleaned the blood from her knife on a guerrilla's combat shirt. Just before the plane crashed, she had managed to get between two seats, which saved her from immediately dying, and getting the hell out had let her leave with her life.

She watched from a distance as the enemy commandos landed, and a few seconds later Toga, how they captured the two children, how they finished Anderson off. The rest had died in the fight, or in the crash. Holy Diver felt her heart go cold as she closed Anderson's eyes, praying that she would have peace in the afterlife.

The four surviving enemies had taken Izuku and Toga, and the only person who could help them now, was her. Holy Diver heard the vehicles of a clean-up crew approaching, ready to erase the crash and its evidence.

She managed to retrieve some of her gear and was grieved by having to leave her fallen comrades behind. It didn’t matter now. She would avenge them.

She contacted command and gave her report, as well as instructions for the reinforcements to get to her. They were at least two hours away.

She followed the tracks of the heavily armoured infantry, clear as day, running fast in the direction of even more fields. The distance the enemy was covering was impressive, and there were no signs of vehicles being used.

The sat phone startled her as she ran along the tracks, announcing a delay on the reinforcements. Another three hours. Plenty of time to find the enemy base.

Going over a hill she found the outskirts of a military base, unmarked, ran by men in a motley of surplus military uniforms, civilian clothes, and work jumpsuits. The tracker placed on Toga, an injection in her arm, started giving feedback again. She was in there.

After that, it had been an exercise on stealth. One sentry post after the other, reaching deeper into the enemy defences. She was moving too fast for them to send reinforcements. She hadn’t come across any particularly difficult foes, they seemed barely trained militias, who by no accounts should be in the middle of Denmark. When they were done, a lot of paperwork better explain all this mess.

Chapter End Notes

A short chapter cause the next one needs the extra space to avoid mood shifts. Hope you like it so far, my heartfelt thanks for every comment and kudos.

Tell me about Toga

Chapter Notes

In which Toga finally gets a backstory!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The dream had shifted from the memory, into a cosy, antique living room. “Do take a seat, Midoriya.” said Pestilentia´s shade, motioning to an armchair. As he seated, he looked at the vague figure, and said “Wouldn’t it be better for this to be face to face? Your Quirk has enough control for that, and you can see my face.”

“That is true. No one has actually asked me to use my true form before, interesting. I guess it lessens the power, the mystery. Fine.” The shadow moved its hand, and became a man of some seventy years, but still straight-backed and proud as a man thirty years his junior.

Pestilentia had grey hair going white at the temples, a well-proportioned face, clean-shaven, and had completely red eyes. In a way it reminded Izuku of Mina Ashido´s eyes, but in a much more intimidating manner. Those eyes, that stare…only All for One had matched the sheer menace with his presence.

“My eyes, isn’t it? My mother used to tell me how much of an advantage they were for any kind of work involving leadership. She had the same eyes, and the men under her command feared her more than death and torture. They are completely unrelated to my Quirk, I know you probably were already theorizing.”

“You said you would tell me about Himiko. Tell me then, villain.”

Pestilentia nodded and pointed to a screen. It showed a family, a white-haired mother, and a blond father, holding two small children, the boy looked to be six years old, the girl four or five. The girl ´s green eyes were very familiar, but she couldn’t quite tell why.

“Do those little fangs seem familiar? That is the Kan family. That little boy, Sekijiro, you know him quite well, don’t you?” He was Class B´s teacher, Vlad King! Of course he knew him, Vlad King sensei had even given them some lessons on their third year!

“Let’s look at a more recent picture.” The image on the screen shifted, and was replaced by another, Christmas decorations on the background, and the four family members had aged, the kids were now teens, a lanky Vlad King wearing his UA uniform proudly, his sister wearing a dress.

The sister looked even more familiar now…was she another hero? Why couldn’t he place her? Had Vlad king mentioned her any time? “That was young Sekijiro's first year, he looks so proud. And look at that young kid, with the dark blonde hair, that is the little Nagate. I lost track of him after he moved to Brazil years later. Have you taken a good look at the sister?” Izuku nodded.

The image shifted a few more years. The background was now filled with banners of congratulations. The parents looked very proud, Vlad King was smiling that smile that graced his lips whenever Class B excelled, looking at his sister.

Wearing a wine-coloured graduation hakama, the sister was holding hands with a yellow-eyed boy her age, who was still wearing an American-styled graduation cap embossed with “UA Business School”. Izuku couldn’t help but wonder at the picture, his fanaticism for heroes getting the upper hand.

Vlad King was wearing a dark suit with New York police medals, he had been in the US too? Asking the teacher was one more reason to get out of this situation.

Beside him, was that the Mexican hero Catrina, who he only recognized from the rare pictures of her without the sugar skull makeup. Had they been a couple? And the kid in the last picture was older now and wearing the earliest Vlad King hoodie!

“I think you get where this is going, you are a clever one after all. The sister is Isana Kan, and that lad with her, is Noriaki Kojima. As much as I would like to show you some evidence, UA security is still quite good, and I can’t just get the security footage, but heres how the story pretty much went between the two..." The supervillain was enjoying this too much.

"Isana was a support course student, as her Quirk only allowed her very minor control over blood, she looked for other ways to help out in society. She specialized in medical equipment, a few dozen items in every major hospital had contributions by her and her friends. While some support classes help the heroes be stronger and more resistant, she worked to help those already wounded.

“On the second year, a joint project was assigned by her mentor, the support hero Killdozer, with the Business Department. The students would have to convince the counterparts to approve a budget for a project, while the business students would keep them grounded on realistic goals. Teams of three students of each class joined their counterparts and worked for an entire semester together.

"Isana met Noriaki, and they formed a curious friendship. Isana had expected the Business students to be strict and humourless, and the lad was anything but. Eventually Isana asked him out on a date, and they had a rather beautiful high school romance.

“The two were very much in love and kept together for the five years they went through college. Two years later, after a couple promotions at work, they decided to marry formally. The Kan´s laughed as they said “Finally!” to their new son-in-law. Here's the wedding, this one does have video.”

A video played on the screen of the couple marrying in a traditional Japanese ceremony, and the party afterwards. Izuku was amazed to see some other teachers in the party, like Power Loader and Present Mic. “And here are their children, twins.” A boy and a girl, showing photos from new-borns till about four years old.

Izuku knew the girl´s golden eyes, the little sharp teeth. Izuku almost felt his heart ache in advance. Something had then happened, he was sure.

“This picture is their fourth birthday, just a few days before their Quirk examinations at the doctor. Their Kyoto doctor was almost apologetic as he diagnosed young Ako with a Quirk that required more studies. Her brother had a useless Quirk that allowed any wound to close some 10% faster, but Ako…two months of studies determined she would have the power to transform into the person whose blood she drank.

It is rather quaint how those test results never reached the clinic Ako´s parents had used…a certain Doctor Ujiko was tipped off, with his boss All for One and, in time, I learned of it. The little girl was finally diagnosed with a harmless face Quirk, that when trained, would let her stretch her ears,

as her father could move his cheeks and nose.

“It had been quite a scare for the Kojima-Kan family, thinking their daughter might have a dangerous Quirk, and they left in relief, back to their home. It gets a bit graphic here, sorry about that.”

The screen showed a slightly fish-eyed view, from a helmet camera. Two men entered the picture, a man with a rhino horn and one with a submachine gun with a laser pointer.

The man with the camera brought his arm to view; it was a shifting dark mass, shaped like a claw. The cameraman walked towards the outer door of a large traditional Japanese home, and ripped it open with both arms, using the claws. A maid was behind, startled at the intrusion; the man with the gun shot her twice in the head.

The cameraman advanced to the house and jumped, his legs had to use a similar Quirk to the arms for that jump. He broke down a window and barrelled down the corridor.

Below, the door was kicked down, and gunfire could be heard. The cameraman kicked down a door adorned with All Might stickers and chibi Draculas. The two children were terrified, and they started screaming in horror.

The cameraman reached for the girl, Ako, with his hand extending in a creepy hook. The hand flopped to the ground as the cameraman collapsed, turning around to see Isana wielding a defibrillator.

The man with the rhino horn charged her, but was stopped by Noriaki, armed with an old katana. The parents seemed to be holding their own, but the man with the submachinegun made it to the second floor, and fired, hitting Isana in the chest.

Isana's white robe quickly turned red. Her husband, enraged, chopped off the gunman´s hands and leg, only to be impaled by the rhino horn.

The cameraman got up, groggily, and snatched Ako from her brother, who tried to protect her, and was knocked away. The video ended there.

“Vlad King arrived twenty minutes later. He found his nephew crying by his parents' corpses in a ruined house. The poor kid was very affected, psychologically. He might have been able to repress the memory eventually, I don’t know.

"The kid is now eighteen years old and lives almost normally with his uncle, he even managed to go to school without being accompanied by his therapists. He grew up to be a decent lad, with a close group of friends, young Koichi.

“The men we used for the job were caught quickly; Vlad King was very close to killing them when he captured them, but by that point, his niece was already half a world away. Ako became a student at my school, the Tselinoyarsk Institute.

"It started out as a government venture in the earliest years of Quirks, and by the point I took over, it was perhaps the best institution of its type. Ako received a number, and her past was erased, a small use of my Quirk to make young minds more…malleable. Number 132798, she was.”

The screen showed the terrified little girl he had seen in the video, and a dead eyed girl in a militarized school uniform. Izuku was horrified by everything he was seeing, but he couldn’t look away or close his eyes, even if he tried.

“At Tselinoyarsk we make assassins. Enforcers. Sleeper agents. The methods have improved enormously, my Quirk was very useful for that. But number 132798…she was the best I trained. Its why I had her taken from her home, I knew the extent of her potential. It took eight years of hard training, but in the end, she could take down a Spetsnaz operator. A twelve-year-old girl. And her brain was filled with more knowledge, to develop as she grew.”

The screen showed Izuku videos of a very young Toga performing the techniques he was now so familiar with, training in physical condition, learning languages and stealth, being subjected to brainwashing, to torture.

“The methods were never humane, yes, but I'm a villain, I don’t care. In the end though, we could never finish her training. All for One approached me, requesting a candidate, as a failsafe...should he die, to kill a number of people around the world. All for One was my ally, and I might have even considered him my friend.

"We go way back. He even told me his real name. Anyone else, he would have ordered. Me, he asked. And so, I gave him Number 132798. But I never truly left young Toga, not at all.

“Her training, all the brainwashing to turn her into the perfect infiltrator, eventually became second nature. I kept her in check with nightmares. I kept educating her, in a way. And now, she has returned, and my perfect assassin is ready to meet the world. I guess this is what it feels like to be a proud parent!”

The supervillain paused for a moment and said “It appears the outside world requires my attention, young one. We'll talk in a while.”

Izuku knew the villain would only abandon this if the situation was dire enough, so a rescue appeared likely. Maybe someone had survived the crash?

He had no way of knowing how long it had been, as he had been unconscious through some of it. Likely less than a day, but he couldn’t be sure.

Izuku thought back to the training he had had with Shinsou, to escape from mind control using One for All. If he used that technique while unconscious, he could, in theory, wake up and destroy the pheromones affecting his brain.

But if he used it now, he might reveal his hand too early and make his next encounter with Pestilentia more difficult, so he had to decide; immediate freedom, or the chance to defeat the villain on his own game, possibly incapacitating him temporarily?

Izuku knew what he had to do. He had to wait for his chance and strike hard. He wasn’t going to go easy on the supervillain anyway, but learning everything he had done to Toga made it personal. Very personal.

With a new location revealed, this Tselinoyarsk Institute, the supervillain was getting even more boxed in. If the rescue he inferred was occurring ended up being successful, he could relay this information to the agents and plan for a better operation; if not, the villains were bound to bring him to their stronghold. So now he had to wait and see. The dreamscape remained stable, the room didn’t shift. He walked around, examining his surroundings.

If Pestilentia had created this room, it had to be a real room to be this detailed. And given everything they knew, it was likely in his St. Petersburg hideout or in the school he had just revealed.

The books were mostly titled in Cyrillic, which Izuku couldn't completely understand. A few titles were in English, and he even found a couple of volumes in Chinese and Japanese. The villain was well-read. The windows outside only showed a few silhouettes, perhaps enough for Izuku to pinpoint a skyline if needed.

The doors didn't work; Pestilentia had pretty much painted them instead of rendering them as useable objects. Izuku sat down again and began working on a strategy to take down Pestilentia for good, hopefully including a part where the villain got punched in the face repeatedly, maybe having his arms crushed for good measure.

An hour after the guard had told the white-haired underboss about a disturbance in the perimeter, Toga saw a second guard enter through a door hidden between the light panels. *That is where I need to go to escape. Just you wait, fuckers, nobody, and I mean NOBODY, touches MY Izu-Izu!*

The chains holding her to the chair were tight, so she couldn't move, and the chair was metal, so she couldn't just jump on it and break it. She might have been able to escape by breaking one of her wrists if the restraints had been differently arranged.

Her best chance of escape was the exchange with Izuku's team, she knew, but it seemed less and less likely with every second that passed. On the other cell, Izuku seemed to relax on his chair, his head moving to a comfortable position. If anyone knew how to break out, it was probably him, but he would need to be awake for that.

If she hadn't been gagged she might have tried to scream, tried to get his attention. If the walls were that transparent it had to mean the material wasn't too thick, or the image would have been very distorted…and Izu-Izu could smash through anything that thin.

She looked around her own room; it seemed curved, almost circular, with a tall roof and a clean floor. Two guards and the Mafioso…With a weapon she could have taken them down.

She tried to analyse their Quirks like Izuku did; none had any apparent fighting Quirks, the leader had spoken Japanese completely fluently, then switched to Russian for one guard and what sounded like Greek for the other one. A simple polyglot, or his Quirk?

The guards were armed with dart rifles, likely using the tranquilizers that had allowed them to bring Izuku here. She had already been tranq´d by them, and she suspected it might be a harmful amount of whatever chemical it used, so she had to avoid getting hit again.

It would also work in her advantage if she managed to free herself, as the tranq rifles were long and could be swung like a bat, and they weren't too easy to shoot in confined spaces. They would have to switch to their sidearms, and that gave her a slight edge on them. Now just an opportunity…

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! The rescue begins next!

A brief interlude for scandalous news

Chapter Notes

The rescue starts, but scandal is brewing at home...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Hatsume, this is dangerous! The plane can't possibly handle than speed!" Iida yelled as Mei pulled the flight controls harder.

Mei couldn't help but reply, despite the stress of handling a supersonic plane "The SR-71 Blackbird had a top speed of more than 3,500 kilometres per hour, and to evade a missile, a pilot surpassed the 4,321 kilometres per hour. The upgraded *Mei* can safely handle that any day of the week in comfort! With the materials Yaomomo made, and my superior engineering, we can make it to six thousand five hundred kilometres an hour! And I´m going to push it to seven thousand, we can make it! Helmets on everybody, and strap in, we´re taking the shortest route, SPACE!"

Mei pressed a button that tightened the seatbelts around her teammates, and assembled bubble helmets around their heads, using a ring of microbots to print the hardened polymer exterior and the foam padding interior. The microbot ring worked as microphone and speakers, allowing for communication.

Mei´s own helmet assembled from her collar, the metal plates fusing around her face into an airtight fit, connected to the plane for air supply, and to her computer network for its Heads-Up Display.

3000 kilometres per hour, altitude 15,000 metres, cabin pressure normal. Mei fired the first turbo charger on the turbines. *Altitude, rising. Speed; 4000 km/h.*

A short while to speed up. *5000 km/h. Altitude, 20,000 metres. Correct direction for planetary rotation. Route traced. Time on target: 2:00:00, counting down.*

"Hatsume, slow down!" Iida kept saying. For a speedster, he was really being a real coward in the face of real speed. Was he afraid the *Mei* would explode or break? If any Baby was made with care, it was this plane.

"I´m willing to break the sound barrier as many times as needed for Izuku, Iida, so let me fly the goddamn plane in peace!" The hero quieted down, and Uraraka said something to him softly. Mei couldn't concentrate on whispers when she had a hypersonic beast to handle.

It was very much like the simulations, except for the part where mistakes would kill her and her friends, and most certainly doom Izuku to staying a prisoner of the villains. And she wasn't going to let Izuku be in danger a second longer than needed.

He was her best friend, maybe the first real friend she´d had in school. He understood her, in his own way. She had made friends with the others thanks to him. She felt things for him that she didn't feel for anyone else…was that why she felt so angry about that Toga person? Was she… jealous?

Or was it a feeling of betrayal on Izuku´s part by not telling her? Mei trusted him with her life… why wouldn't Izuku just tell her? She would not have judged him…or maybe she would have?

Would she have thought less of her friend for doing something she couldn't understand? They would have to sit down and talk about it for a long time when he was free.

The plane´s armour was holding like a dream, she could probably make a spaceship with it. The sonic booms as they crossed every Mach were dampened and barely perceptible. The turbines were just slightly strained as the plane reached 6,000 kilometres per hour, maybe she could even take the *Mei* to seven thousand?

The *Mei* flew high above commercial flight paths, above military aircraft heights…outside the cabin, the atmosphere was thin. They could save some kilometres at this height and go on a straighter route. Mei looked at the readings on her HUD; less than an hour to get there. She was good at what she did, and she knew it.

Mei locked the stick with the autopilot and turned to look at her teammates. The microbots on Tsuyu´s helmet were busy scrubbing some jelly she had puked, mostly undigested, and Tokoyami, who wasn't yet an official member of the team, held her hand, comforting her.

Uraraka had a thousand-yard stare, focused on her own thoughts. Iida hyperventilated, as Todoroki and Momo tried to reassure him. "I made half of this plane, Tenya, we´ll be okay!"

Minoru Mineta liked gossip. It was easier to talk to girls when he talked about gossip. Hell, he probably had become friends with Setsuna Tokage from Class B out of sheer rumour talking; who was dating who, the crushes their classmates had.

In the blink of an eye, Mineta had made a completely platonic friendship with a woman who wasn't a family member, and he had so much fun that he never actually noticed. By the end of the second year, Yaoyorozu and the girls in Class A had made a cake for Setsuna, thanking her for calming down Mineta´s lewdness, for "house-training" him.

Which had actually meant they kept the lewd comments among themselves and were a bit more discrete.

Now as a Pro Hero, Mineta had less free time to meet his former classmates, but he would always make time to meet his friend and watch the Mount Lady-Midnight show; one hour of rumours, speculation, and banter about Hero´s personal lives.

"Yo, little slimeball, your favourite lizard is here!" Mineta could hear Setsuna before she rang the doorbell.

"Just a minute!" He opened the door, which had the doorknob adjusted to his height; puberty had added almost twenty centimetres to his height, but he was by no account tall, even average.

At least he didn't look so much like a baby anymore, and he had lost the beer gut. Kaminari had told him he now wasn't a child, but rather a slightly fearsome hobbit, or a skinny, beardless dwarf. They had quite a long conversation about how a bearded Mineta would look like

"Hey lizard brain, what´s up?" said Minoru as they did their secret handshake, which involved two balls of Mineta´s hair, detaching one of Setsuna´s hands, and a cartwheel.

“That never gets old, my ballsy friend.”

“So, you brought the snacks?”

“Of course, watching anything longer than thirty minutes without chips and French onion dip is a waste! Are Denki and Kyoka joining today?”

“Nah, double date with Hagakure and Ojiro. Maybe the show today will be about how they are official now?”

Mineta switched on the TV and surfed the channels, finding quickly the show. After the initial credits, the camera showed both hosts lounging on a two-seat couch.

Midnight started, seductively looking at the camera “Hello dear viewers watching us on TV, livestream or on Demand. We are, as always, your hosts…the beautiful, larger than life Mount Lady! And your mistress, Midnight!”

Mt. Lady took over, playing with her honey-golden hair “Welcome to our weekly hour of the news you really want to hear. No finances, wars or the delicious stress of sports, just the sweet, sweet insider scope on the lives of the people who fight for us; Heroes!” The crowd clapped and yelled, even a couple “Marry me!” from the people were heard.

“Tonight, we start with a very special interview! We have the Pro Hero Hawks and the confirmation of a very spicy piece we did a few weeks back! Drumroll, Mt. Lady!”

Mt. Lady drummed on Midnight´s thighs, causing the crowd to go wild. Mineta gave a happy whistle.

“Joining the hero, is Fuyumi Todoroki!!!” Hawks and Todoroki´s sister walked into the stage, accompanied by the hero´s theme jingle, with a hawk shriek at the end.

Mineta couldn’t help but feel jealous, Hawks just oozed coolness and confidence, and absolutely rocked a brown leather jacket and faded blue jeans. And his boots, he would need to ask Aoyama about those later, they were as good as his, now that he wasn’t shopping in kid´s shoe shops!

And Fuyumi…Mineta regretted not sticking to her brother Shouto like a leech, any excuse to see a beautiful woman! Studying, tutoring, whatever!

“How are we expected to compete when that girl is the “older sister” fetish in human form!” Setsuna threw the hand she had severed earlier at the TV, missing because she still wanted to see the show.

“So, Hawks, is the “too fast for his own good” hero finally slowing down to smell the roses?”

“Not at all! Fighting villains in life-or-death duels is not half as exciting as having Endeavor as your father-in-law!” Mineta almost choked on his drink.

Mount Lady asked, “Tell us everything, when did this start?”

This time, Fuyumi spoke “Hawks started working with my father two and a half years ago, and he started coming around sometimes. He asked me out on a bet with my brother Natsuo, I accepted on a bet with my other brother Shouto, and we both really enjoyed the date, so we had a second one, and a third…” The public “aww”ed.

Then Hawks, taking Fuyumi´s hand amidst a loud swoon from the female audience, said “We kept

our relationship discrete, with me being a Hero we didn't want villains doing something to us. But we just got engaged a short time back, and we wanted our love to be out there for the world to see!"

"God, Hawks goes fast in everything! My parents were almost thirty when they had me!" Setsuna had probably expected the relationship to have been less serious.

"If I had a girlfriend as hot as that, I´d be getting a ring quickly too!" Mineta told his friend.

The interview lasted a few more minutes, the heroines asking them about the future wedding, about how their families felt, if it would affect Hawks´ hero work…and then Midnight started asking them about their kinks in bed. The show wasn't exactly family friendly, after all!

Mineta and Setsuna leaned over in the couch, like they were facing a video game´s boss battle. They exchanged a mischievous smile.

Fuyumi had turned as red as the crimson streaks in her hair, but she managed to say "Well, his feathers are quite warm in winter nights…" the crowd cheered, most couples put on the spot would get overwhelmed and not answer the big question.

Finally, the heroines thanked their guests, and Mt. Lady stood up and said "So Hawks and the Todorokis did have something! As always, WE CALLED IT!"

Midnight slapped her co-host´s behind playfully, saying "You thought he was having an affair with Endeavor, dear!" Somewhat defeated, the giant hero sat down.

Midnight spoke then "But that is not all the breaking news we have, dear viewers! We have the juiciest piece of gossip in Japan, hot from our confidential sources! Play the video, Yui!"

The stoic Class B student Yui Kodai didn't react to being on the spotlight, instead gave the heroines a thumbs up, and clicked on a very large switch she held.

Yui´s fans went wild. She had spoken less than a dozen times since she had become a member of the show, and yet had found hundreds of passionate fans. Men and women all but fought online to get a ticket and watch Yui press the button live.

The screen showed a picture of the UA graduation, as the Snake Hero, and field reporter for "Heroic Hearts, Quirked Romances", Uwabami, narrated.

"The new big trio from UA high; Ground Zero, Frostburn and Deku! Rising stars of Japan, they have captured our hearts and imaginations. Ground Zero and Frostburn have already been guests in our show, and the subject of some of our wildest speculation! In particular in Ground Zero´s special, where Mt. Lady was proven wrong, and the great Snake Hero, Uwabami, proven correct, when Ground Zero revealed he had no romance with his classmate, Uravity!" Mt. Lady´s sigh of defeat was heard even over the video.

"But the third Hero, Deku, has eluded our cameras, our spies…and has kept all his fans befuddled. On our social media, the poll we made to determine the most popular pairing for him included pretty much everyone of his female classmates and even a few male ones, with the most popular options being his Hero Teammates, Uravity, Froppy, and Mei Hatsume, CEO, Chief Engineer and Chief of Tests for the rising company Hatsume Industries.

"Froppy got into a relationship a year ago with the Hero Tsukuyomi, so Midnight´s pick was eliminated. And the few photos we managed to get weighed the balance in Hatsume´s side slightly, until today! We have completely new, unaired photos of Deku and this is frankly quite scandalous."

The screen showed Midoriya, hand in hand with a blonde girl, strolling around perhaps the most famous amusement park in the world. The picture was slightly blurry; someone had taken it with a phone, in a hurry.

It made sense to Mineta; Japanese paparazzi wouldn't likely be waiting for Midoriya to appear in Florida, and Americans probably weren't too familiar with Japanese heroes, except perhaps All Might.

The blur didn't let him identify the girl at a first glance; she was shorter than Izuku, and not particularly busty, so Minoru discarded the thought it might be Melissa Shield, the American girl they had met on I-Island. Mineta remembered Midoriya and the Quirkless girl being very close in the island.

He had never really wondered why he hadn't seen Midoriya contact her, she had seemed a capable support creator…maybe Hatsume was better? A thought of the two engineers, wrestling in the mud for the right to be Midoriya´s support mechanic crept into Minoru´s thoughts.

"Who is that girl and why did she steal Midoriya from me? How inconsiderate! I was going to seduce him in the next party!"

"Setsuna, offering the guy a footjob while holding both of your severed legs is probably too creepy for Midoriya!"

"I could have been subtle! And come on, both our hair colours are green, it is DESTINY!" They both laughed at that and kept on watching. Mineta was very curious, the girl seemed oddly familiar…

The next picture was taken with a steadier hand, even if it had the same subpar resolution. The girl was wearing an olive-green t-shirt, the kind American soldiers used for physical training (Mineta knew because he had done quite a bit of "research" on women in uniform), jean shorts, and a hoodie bought in the park.

Her hair was a sort of dirty blonde, darker than Melissa Shield´s, as far as Mineta remembered, pulled back with a headband, leaving the girl´s forehead and ears uncovered, the rest of the hair gathered in a ponytail.

The girl wore large aviator shades, hiding her eyes, and she was covering her mouth, apparently hiding her laugh at something Midoriya had said. "I´d tap that" declared Mineta proudly.

"Dude, we can´t see half her face, and her hand is covered in scars"

"I don't care, look at those thighs, Setsuna, they could crush my head just as easily as Ashido´s"

"They have scars too! Midoriya´s looking like a goddamn snack, though."

"Is he actually trying to disguise himself with that ballcap and sunglasses? Does he think he is in one of those American Heroes´ Civil Wars?"

"It kinda fits him, though his shirt saying "sneaking suit" ruins it a bit. Anyway, why do the American heroes fight so much among themselves?"

"I guess they don't have as many villains as us, and they never end up killing each other…maybe its like wrestling?"

"You mean the old type with Hagakure´s great-great-whatever John Cena, or the sexy type with

the mud?"

"What the hell, why are we both thinking about mud wrestling today?"

"Cause its hot?"

"It is, yep."

On the special report, Uwabami was spinning crazy theories about the girl being an American hero "…she might even be the Royal Hero, Empress!"

They showed a proud looking heroine with a tiara, a ballroom gown straight out of a fairytail, slashed at the legs to allow her to fight, and heels that looked deadly by themselves. The cold arrogance in the pose was so attractive!

"Isn´t that like a princess, countess or something?" asked Setsuna "I don't think I can compete with royalty, my purple friend!"

Mineta examined both pictures, and said "They are not the same, Empress has a birthmark on her left bicep!"

Setsuna looked at him quizzically "Her costume covers her arms and hands; how do you know?"

"I met her in a police meeting five months ago, she helped us catch some weapons dealers! She was on vacation and she spotted some evidence and got us to help!"

"it makes sense, her Quirk is just being really smart, she needed to hire servants to do the job!"

"Hey, Mind Palace isn't super intelligence! Its enhanced deductive reasoning!"

"Uh-huh…did my little slime ball finally find "the one"?"

"Shit…I hope so. Prince Consort Mineta sounds badass! I´m saving up favours with the chief so the police can send me over there on a case, and Hagakure said Empress had told her I was very polite, so I am pretty much ready!"

"So, if it isn't Empress, and the American heroines they mentioned don't seem to fit, who is stealing The Deku from womankind, in our thirstiest hour of need?"

"Let's keep watching, maybe it's a surprise reveal!" A few more photos had been shown of Midoriya and the mystery girl, and Mineta could finally see as much of her face as wasn't obscured by the shades; she had a fine nose, slightly upturned, actually quite similar to Empress´ nose, if a bit less sharp; pale skin coloured with blush in half the photos; dimples on her cheeks when she smiled, though she apparently took care not to show teeth. "She is kinda cute, I´ll admit."

"And finally, from the friend who sent the pictures, have one where can actually see her face!"

Midoriya and the girl were sitting in a restaurant and Midoriya was holding a burger, which had spilled some ketchup on his face.

The girl was cleaning him with a potato fry, and they both appeared to be laughing out loud. This time the girl wasn't wearing the sunglasses, and she was smiling wide; her eyes were golden, flecked with green and orange, her smile had fangs instead of canines.

"Hold on, we have a caller on the line…maybe it is the mystery girl! Hello caller, please tell us your name!"

“This is Lock Hero, Rock Lock, my wife is a big fan and I was watching with her…this is important”

“Oh Rock Lock, so good to hear from you, how´ve you been?”

“That girl, she stabbed me two years ago! Her name is Himiko Toga!”

Chapter End Notes

This chapter is pretty much the reason Mineta is tagged as a character, the first draft had him dying "Scrappy Doo has been found dead in Miami" style. I figured he would be the best option for including Midnight and Mt. Lady´s social show. As always, thanks for reading. The actual rescue begins next time!

Into the breach

Chapter Notes

> The real rescue is HERE. For the first fight "Immigrant Song" is obligatory, for the fight with Shouto´s team I listened to "Versus Homunculus", "Clash of the Alchemists" and "To be King" from Fullmetal Alchemist Brotherhood, they fit the fight rather nicely.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

A helicopter sped through the air into Denmark, carrying the Nordic Confederacy´s best heroes: the Shieldmaiden Hero Freya, the Swedish werewolf Ulfheddin and Finland Finneas, the Tundra Hero.

A militia had taken out an American Intelligence plane and taken the agents prisoner, including the Japanese hero Deku and an agent with her identity undisclosed. In just a few hours, the Americans had made contact with their Nordic counterparts and secured their cooperation, launching a lightning strike against the enemy.

The Americans had revealed that Pestilentia, the second most wanted man in the world, was involved, and that had greased the wheels of teamwork enormously.

“So, let me get this straight…there´s an American down there killing everyone in the perimeter, making a big distraction?” said Finland Finneas.

“Seems so, we´ll hit them from behind and get them all.”

Ulfheddin replied in a snarl. “Any other reinforcements coming?”

“The Americans are sending their guys too, I think, they´ll probably arrive half an hour after us.”

Freya showed them a hologram displaying the mission area and the air routes their allies would take “That´s them, I´m not sure who they are sending but they are probably good. Wait…we´ve got a transmission from Hero Net, patch it through.”

Through static they heard “…from Team First Response, any hero units in the area?”.

A sonic boom split the air as a hypersonic aircraft decelerated into the area, moving the air around the soundwave and rocking the helicopter. Freya´s hologram adjusted to the new trajectory, a wide arrow cutting into the area.

“This is the North´s Finest, identify, we could not get details.”

A voice answered, clearly relieved to have slowed down, speaking English with a Japanese accent “This is Frostburn, Team First Response, from Japan. They have our friend down there, we are getting him back.”

“This is Freya, commander of the rescue effort, if you are here we´ll take the help, we can sort any paperwork later. We´ll deploy to the perimeter, engage their forces completely, and destroy them. You take the compound and get your friend back. See you down there!”

The helicopter was nearing the target. “60 seconds out!” yelled the pilot. Freya put her winged helmet on and grabbed her shield, a raven painted on it.

She slid open the helicopter´s door and looked down into the veritable warzone below: the American agent had barricaded herself in an observation post, and was surrounded by four tanks, half a dozen APC´s and even one of the mech suits that were becoming commonplace in Africa, in Ndege Mweusi´s war.

And there were already a few burnt vehicle husks around her as well. One of the tanks exploded into flames as a gigantic bear joined the fight. A Quirk user, obviously, the bear man was almost six meters tall, and barrelled down at the American.

“That one is mine! Till Valhalla, friends!”

Freya jumped off the helicopter, axe in hand, as the speakers in the kneepads and elbow pads of her suit blasted “Immigrant Song” As the song reached the “Aaaaaaaahhaaaaah haaaaaah!” part, she joined the singing, her powerful lungs combined with the speakers turned the bear man´s attention, as she landed boot first on his face.

One hundred and fifty kilos of heavy armour and muscle, and the enhanced speed and strength of her Valkyrie Quirk, all connecting on the bear snout of her enemy. Bones cracked, the momentum took down the great mass of the bear man.

Upon closer inspection he was more man that bear, his physiology much more human than ursine. As he fell down, he used his claws to try and strike Freya, who easily sidestepped.

Freya identified a bear claw tattoo on the enemy´s brown fur, and with that she could know who he was: the Siberian serial killer, the changeling Berserker. A nasty fellow wanted in Europe for his crimes.

Berserker rolled to his feet and gave a bloody sneeze. “Cyka!” he yelled, as a powerful, heavy blow hit the spot where Freya had just been half a second ago. The speed and greater size shouted the influence of the Trigger drug, and Freya knew just how dangerous that could be.

Around them, Ulfheddin had overturned a tank and Finland Finneas had frozen various vehicles solid. Overhead, the hypersonic plane from before had launched some missiles into the compound, which imploded with a vacuum sound. Implosion bombs were a creative idea to minimize casualties while still destroying infrastructure, and Freya approved the allied heroes using them.

Berserker kept attacking, speed and strength combined into a deadly power. Freya dodged every strike, counterattacking with her axe, delivering deadly blows. After Berserker overextended a punch, Freya severed a tendon in his arm, jumped in the air and, using all the might of her Quirk to strike with her shield, finally knocked down the criminal for good. And just in time for the end of her theme song.

Around her, her companions had disabled every vehicle, except for the mech, which struggled against Ulfheddin, before being tripped on Finland Finneas´ ice. Freya jumped high in the air and landed on the mech´s cockpit, and with a mighty heave broke the lock, opening the mech.

The pilot, a woman with hedgehog quills instead of hair, raised her hands in surrender. Luckily Freya had enough flex cuffs for dozens of criminals.

Turning around, Freya met the American agent who had held an entire mechanized brigade by herself. Tall, covered in blood and soot, her fatigues torn and stained. She had a light machinegun

slung on her back and a rocket launcher on her arms. And quite attractive, in a "just escaped hell armed with a rusty dagger" way. "Thanks for the assist, you saved my ass back there"

"Happy to help" Freya said, extending her hand "I´m Freya, those two are Ulfheddin and Finland Finneas. Nice to meet you!"

The agent shook her hand "Holy Diver. Freya…weren't you supposed to be two meters tall?"

"The cameras add quite a bit."

"That plane was with you?"

"No, they were some First Response guys…we thought you Americans had called them?"

Holy Diver sighed heavily "Ughhh…Midoriya´s friends. They seriously came from Japan in time. The paperwork is gonna be a fucking nightmare. Lets just move out, there´s another group of militia coming and this place is too full of holes"

Shouto Todoroki fast roped from the *Mei*, quickly reaching the ground and surveying the scene. Iida joined him, and a second later, Momo was by his side. Tokoyami glided using Dark Shadow, Uraraka slowed her descent with her Quirk, Asui just rolled as she landed, Hastume was using some sort of propulsion system.

The enemy compound had two entrances "Iida, take Uraraka and Tokoyami and go to the left side, Momo, Tsuyu, with me. Hatsume, stay with the plane."

"That´s a no from me, chief" She sped off to the roof and blew an implosion charge, turning a section of roof into a super-dense ball of roofing.

"Shit, just move out, we´ll meet up with her inside anyway."

The two teams charged through their respective doors. Inside, the corridors were dark, and Shouto could see a light at a distance. "Momo, armour up, Tsuyu, go high. I´ll light them up." He fired up his left side, aimed to the faraway light, and called his attack "Prominence Burn!"

White-hot flames lit the corridor, showing the concrete walls and several doors on the sides. The ball of flame hit a solid target and enveloped it, the fire glowing in every shade of red and orange.

A figure stepped through the flame, a Nomu! Twice as big as the one they had first encountered, it almost reached the ceiling. In a bizarre, nightmarish scene, the Nomu wielded a fire extinguisher at the flames, trying to put out the fire, before being consumed itself.

The Nomu´s efforts hadn't been in vain, though, as a small opening in the flame wall allowed a dark figure to emerge. Three more joined the first figure. Three identical armoured men, with a bigger one behind.

Red eyes contrasted against black armoured masks. Machine guns on their hands. The enemies raised their weapons and fired.

Shouto reacted instantly, shielding Momo and himself with a block of ice three meters thick.

"That is a special forces formation, those are Mountain Brigade troopers…I know what to do." She

removed the vambrace from her armour; a late medieval Gothic harness, made of aramid fibres that could withstand a .50 calibre shot, and produced a shield large enough to cover her entire body.

“Tsuyu, throw these behind them! When we move, combo Beta!” she tossed a pair of chain grenades to the Frog Hero. “We´ll advance ten meters, then you send ice low, take to the wall, and send fire to the big one.”

Momo produced a mace and held it with her right hand. “Have I ever told you that you are so attractive when you strategize, Momo?”

“Quite a few times, Shouto. Let´s do this. On three. Three, two, one…Plus Ultra!”

Shouto sent a spear of flame to melt the ice wall, and they charged behind Momo´s shield.

“Now!”

Chains and ice spikes exploded behind the enemy troopers, catching one and tripping another, who instead of falling, just knelt and kept firing. Shouto kept running, catching the wall with ice and fire footholds.

Five steps and he jumped, his hottest fire aimed at the largest trooper. “Prominence burn: Super Nova!” A bullet hit his shoulder as the fireball connected on the big guy´s face, turning his helmet white hot on contact. Shouto might have had time to ponder the ethical consequences of melting a man´s head off, if he hadn’t just caught a shot.

As he landed he covered the injury in ice, he would have to rely on ice to avoid injuring himself further. He skated on a slide of ice, getting behind the remaining troopers. The one on the floor squared his weapon directly between Shouto´s eyes. The trooper pulled the trigger.

But Shouto had been faster, and the machinegun was frozen in a fraction of a second, catching six bullets in a spire of crystal.

Ahead, Tsuyu dropped from the ceiling, kicking one of the soldiers as Momo soaked their fire with her shield. Tsuyu´s kick connected with the helmet, sending the trooper´s head back with an audible snap. The Rainy Day Hero disarmed the enemy with her tongue and leapt back; if the trooper could still fight with a broken neck, she might need to change strategy.

Momo charged the third Mountain Brigade trooper, hitting his machine gun with the shield and striking his knee with the mace. There was no scream, but the leg was crippled. The commando stepped back and tried to get a better position, but Momo attacked his head.

Her mace was at least five kilograms heavy, and likely to cause a concussion or at least smash through the faceplate. The soldier blocked with his weapon, bending it beyond repair, and discarded it. Before the trooper could reach for a melee weapon, Momo bashed with her shield, her entire weight behind the strike. The man stumbled backwards, putting his weight on the crippled leg, and fell.

Shouto´s opponent drew a machete, and hacked at his arm, frozen at the forearm. The ice splintered, and the trooper was freed. His legs were still wrapped in Hatsume´s polymer chains, so the soldier swept Shouto's feet from under him with both legs.

It took Shouto by surprise, but his reflexes were faster, much faster, and he cast a pillar of ice to stop his fall. From the pillar exploded a dozen small shards, one of which Shouto held to position himself, the rest hitting the trooper and keeping him down. Shouto clapped the floor and ice surged to envelop the trooper completely. “Stay down, fucker.”

Tsuyu´s enemy had armed himself with a combat knife, held in an ice pick grip. Tsuyu kicked and the man defended with his arms, counterattacking with slashes. Tsuyu was strong and skilled, but the opponent was tireless, and her attacks seemed to have no effect. The trooper managed to get a lucky hit, cutting Tsuyu´s left leg, leaving her limping as she backed away.

Shouto needed to help his friend before the soldier could press the advantage; he stomped on the ground, creating two razor sharp stakes that impaled the man at the knees, immobilizing him. Stopped mid-step, it was all he could do to reach out with his gauntlet.

“Tsuyu, remember Daniel-san!”

Catching on instantly, Tsuyu performed a beautiful, deadly crane kick, passing through the trooper ´s guard and catching him on the chin. A normal crane kick might knock down a man, but a kick from Tsuyu´s super strong legs, trained by the Rabbit Hero Mirko? That would knock out a titan. The trooper´s head snapped back, his spine broken, his mask shattered.

The last soldier had managed to take away Momo´s shield and mace, throwing them aside, attacking with a two-handed axe. Momo caught the weapon and disarmed her opponent. They circled each other, and the trooper charged.

Momo clapped her hands in her “Alchemist Stance”, clapping them on the floor. Using the lipids on her body with complete control, she channelled her Creation through her arms, her forearms, her hands. “Gate of Truth!” she yelled.

The final attack tore through her upper body armour, adding the plates as shrapnel in the pillar of matter that enveloped the trooper and tore his armour away, leaving behind a large, unconscious man with dead eyes, chained to the floor in titanium.

Using the relative peace won in the fight, Momo took out her rugged schematics tablet, engineered by Mei to survive pretty much everything. A few clicks later, she found the schematics for a vibration radar gauntlet, and crafted it around her, now unarmoured, left arm.

A knock on the floor and the vibrations were turned into data for the reader. With a sigh of relief, Momo said, “That looks like all of them, at least in this part of the building, and the doors in the corridor seem empty too. I think we earned a breather.”

Shouto disinfected his wound and sealed it shut, covering it with a fireproof bandage. Next, he treated Tsuyu´s wound, a nasty cut that kept bleeding. “He got me good, kero.”

“You´ll be alright, Tsuyu-chan, but you may need to go back to the plane.”

“Just go and get Midoriya, I´ve got the rearguard. Kero.” Momo crafted a spear for Tsuyu to lean on and fight if needed, and then started walking ahead with Shouto. Shouto gave her a calorie bar from his pouches

“Your signature move consumes quite a bit. Take this.” Her fingers lingered on his for a couple of seconds as she grabbed the bar, her gaze crossing his.

“I think I need something more than calories right now.” She smiled, and she kissed him. No villains stood a chance against them if they fought together.

Chapter End Notes

The assault has begun! Thanks for reading!

Breach and Clear, Hatsume edition

Chapter Notes

> For the mood of this chapter I recommend the song "Deadline" from the Call of Duty Modern Warfare 2 soundtrack

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Mei Hatsume kicked a merc who had apparently been tough enough to take an electric grenade´s explosion and stay awake, if completely out of combat. A rocket kick to the noggin put him to sleep effectively enough, in the end.

The third room she had cleared; blowing up the door, neutralizing the hired guns, giving her Babies the best trial that she could ever have hoped for. But she wasn't happy. She was pissed off. Testing Babies was fun with Izuku. Having to use them to rescue him from a goddamn LAIR…it was not fun at all.

Now if she knew anything about dungeons, Izuku was probably held in the safest part. The fifteen goons she had zapped until now would probably just be a taste of what she would find deeper in the building.

At least there was only one floor, according to Baby Number 760, the geological analysis probe. And if she got lost, Baby Number 155 would fly around her with directions towards the densest walls. And so, as the One True King of Westeros had said, she would go forward, only forward.

155 pointed toward the wall to her left, so she placed a three-stage charge on it, inspired by the Quirks of Bakugou and Todoroki.

An explosion would create hairline fractures in the concrete in a spiderweb pattern, a jet of water would fill them, and then the water would be flash frozen, expanding and shattering the wall! Baby Number 662 was great and functioned as desired! The thick concrete shattered, and she kicked through, boots first into the fray.

Inside, four stunned mercs reacted quickly to seeing a genius burst through a solid wall, aiming sloppily in her general direction. She fired a thrust from her right gauntlet, pushing herself left, spinning with the momentum directly into a goon´s face! One down!

Her left arm was immediately up, and with a flick of the wrist she fired a taser dart at the closest merc, who was fried. Two down. Thrust backwards with the boots, Mei evaded the second hail of bullets.

Sparring with Izuku had done wonders for her reaction time! It might not be hero-level reflexes, but these guys felt slow! Using her Quirk, Mei focused on the two hired guns´ weapons; quite outdated AK-12´s, with enough rust and just the right amount of bad maintenance to be neutralised in a hurry.

Mei raised her left arm again, moving her hand from the way of her lower wrist. A small pellet gun sprang, and Mei aimed. With her Quirk, she was a natural marksman…markswoman?

Two little polymer balls shot before the goons could fire, hitting the magazine release on each rifle, then bouncing off…one managed to hit the opposite merc´s gun safety, the other bounced harmlessly to the floor. One guy still had a shot, and the other would just be momentarily inconvenienced.

Mei had to act quickly. Using both boot and gauntlet thrusters, Mei launched herself at the most dangerous opponent, her helmet connecting with the man´s skull in a nasty cracking sound. The other man was reacting quickly and was already aiming at her as Mei tossed a large Allen key at his stomach.

With a few more seconds she might have aimed at his genitals, but the throw had made the man miss his last shot, so it was good enough!

Until he swung the rifle like a bat straight into Mei´s ribs. She felt like she was choking, she wanted to cry. It was much, much worse than getting the air punched out of her lungs. She blasted her gauntlet thruster next to the merc's ear and kneed him in the groin.

The burst probably shattered his inner ear, Mei thought, as the man held his sore privates with one hand and his bleeding ear with the other. Mei used her taser on him for good measure.

Her ribs hurt so much.

She had broken bones before, both legs and the fingers on her left hand, but this was worse. Every breath hurt. She was scared. What if a lung was punctured? She needed more armour.

She needed a doctor.

She needed Izuku.

He made her feel so safe, even when she was doing seriously dangerous work. And that was why she had to find him.

The collection of babies she had brought along was growing thinner. The next wall would be her last implosion charge, designed around spreading magnetic metal particles through a surface, and then pulling them with a ridiculously strong electromagnetic charge.

The metal particles were very malleable, and could latch rather well to various substances, particularly cements. Thus, a chunk of wall a meter wide was compressed into a ball twenty centimetres in diameter. At least this place was empty.

It was a short, well-lit corridor with a heavy metal door on each side. Would she pick the right or left? Or keep going straight? Her mind was going slower than usual. Exhaustion and pain, maybe?

A couple minutes earlier she had calculated the vector for a rubber ball to bounce on a rifle to another, and now, she couldn’t even decide on which door to go. She needed a minute, maybe breathe a bit. Just a bit, not enough to hurt…and then the right door swung open, kicked down by the enhanced legs of Tenya Iida.

“Hatsume, you are alive! Why did you run off?”

“I thought my plan was better than Todoroki's, and I really want to save Izuku. But most importantly, where is your helmet? I didn’t bring a spare, you know…only for Izuku. And why is Uraraka holding those rebar poles like javelins? Are you using them like that?”

“Its good enough to spear a Nomu. I don’t have time for your bullshit, Hatsume, get out of the way.

Tenya, kick the door down." Mei noticed Uraraka calling Iida by his first name…when had that started? Uraraka shoulder checked Mei as she didn't move aside immediately. She looked downright murderous.

From the door came running Tokoyami "More Nomus, and something big. We have to move!" Dark Shadow ripped the door to the left from its hinges, and the team hurried away from the heavy footsteps and mindless wails of a horde of Nomus.

"I thought only All for One had used Nomus!" said Tokoyami as they ran.

The door on the left took them in a curve, and in the edge of the corridor Mei could spot a heavy blast door. "That door can hold them, I can open it!"

"Wait!" ordered Uraraka, with a new power in her voice that sent a chill down Mei´s spine "Give me a rope or something. I can retrieve my javelins if I throw them at the lights, making Dark Shadow stronger."

Mei tossed a high-tension wire at the Gravity Quirk user, who caught it in mid air and started wrapping around the rebar rods as Mei launched herself forward with her thrusters. Iida followed in a sprint that did not use his Quirk, saving it for the fight ahead if they were caught between the Nomus and the blast door.

One by one every lamp in the corridor was smashed by Uraraka, and she stood her ground a good six meters away from Mei, who was working the lock with a ferrofluid lockpick.

At the current pace it might take her two minutes. Iida joined his fellow heroes and the empowered Dark Shadow. The spirit bird was positively rearing for a fight.

The footsteps became louder and louder, and the gurgled screams of the Nomus filled the air. Dark Shadow made his move, slicing through the first ranks of smaller, normal sized Nomus, carving them up like a Thanksgiving turkey.

But the spirit bird couldn't completely block the passage, and a few Nomus slipped past him. Uraraka threw her weightless javelins with frightening accuracy and speed through the brains of a few, while Iida kicked the rest into submission.

Then the ground shook. The corridor was almost a half-circle with a radius of some six meters, and the Nomu that charged their way had to hunch to fit. It might have been seven meters tall, and more than three meters wide, built of muscle, with dark red skin and no face; parts of his skull could be seen among the muscle tissue.

As with most Nomus, his brain overflowed from a broken skull. The colossal Nomu smashed a few of his brethren to get to them, only to have his path cut by Dark Shadow.

"Dark Shadow: Wrath of the Cursed!"

The spectral avian unleashed a flurry of punches that would have made All Might proud. The Nomu was pushed back, and the last punch made him slide on the floor a few meters.

Among the Nomus appeared a blond man in a crimson, and the Nomus parted to let him through. Mei remembered Izuku telling her that Nomus were easy to brainwash into obedience, from what he had learned of All for One; this man seemed to have that well under control.

"Muda! That was completely useless!"

With a single gaze the Nomu attacked again, compelled by the man´s Quirk. The flurry of punches Dark Shadow had used was mirrored against him, and he started taking hits. Every punch that connected hurt Tokoyami, but he kept it up with courage.

Mei had to hurry or Tokoyami would get killed.

Another turn around the mechanism and there…the blast door opened.

“Go!” she yelled, vaulting over the thick steel plate into a room that looked like an airlock. Uraraka somersaulted into the airlock, Iida sprinted, Tokoyami flew with Dark Shadow under his cloak.

The instant they were all in, Mei slammed the emergency lock button. The blast door closed with a thud, trapping a small Nomu under it and flattening it to death. A punch made the blast door shake, leaving a very small dent. The big Nomu would have to try harder!

The inner door was a simple metal door, so a kick from Iida opened it easily. Inside they found themselves inside a huge dome, dozens of meters tall. In the middle of it were two round rooms, made of glass panels.

The glass was transparent, so Mei could see inside them with her Quirk like she was just standing there. A few people in each one, surrounding a chair in each. The room on the left had a man in a white suit and half a dozen mercs, around a girl, and in the one on the right were ten guards and…

“Izuku!”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! Hope you guys like it so far!

The Duel

Chapter Notes

> For this duel I recommend "You're...Immortal?" from The Witcher 3: Hearts of Stone as the mood song.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Himiko Toga witnessed her captors get increasingly stressed and worried as the building shook around them. A rescue was being attempted, and the heroes were well beyond the response the mercs could muster.

The white-haired Mafioso was just barely keeping his cool as he communicated in several languages on a cell phone and two walkie talkies, coordinating the defence of the base.

At the beginning, a lone attacker had hit the perimeter, so they had sent mercs after them. It wasn't enough, and vehicles had been sent, including tanks and a mech suit, as well as a gigantic bear man. Toga didn't need to see the size of the bear guy to know the threat he posed, just hear the tone on the Mafia boss´ voice.

After that, the boss that dispatched the surviving Mountain Brigade commandos to one of the paths to the cells, a Nomu wrangler on the other, and a ton of mercs to the rooms between. Less than ten minutes later, explosions had started to rattle around the building, with weird vacuum sounds on some and common fragmentation on others.

When the Mountain Brigade went silent, the Mafioso started to lose his shit. "Where the fuck did these guys come from? Someone bring me the security cams!"

A merc with a laptop entered through the metal door and showed it to the boss. "We were supposed to throw Toga at those fuckers in five hours after dealing with the Americans and their allies…how did they get here so fast? No transport Quirk can take people all the way from Japan in an hour. Looks like the boss screwed a prediction for the first time, gents! Get ready!"

More mercs gathered in Toga´s holding cell, and she could see even more inside Izu-Izu´s, who was still unconscious. *What´s gonna be their plan now? Are they using some sort of Kurogiri type to extract us? Will they fight Izu-Izu´s friends? The Mountain Brigade guys were no joke, and who knows how many soldiers they have here…*

The issue was how to get free first, cause the mercs may as well put a bullet in their heads if the heroes reached them, at least that was what Toga would expect them to do.

Toga focused on the blood running through her veins. She hadn't drunk anyone else´s blood in some time, and drinking her own wouldn't give her any benefit; she wouldn't transform at all, so she couldn't use it to escape the gag in her mouth or the cuffs on her arms and legs. *I'm still at the same situation as an hour ago. Fuck.*

Ten minutes after the Mafioso had told his people to get ready, a commotion started outside. Toga could faintly hear the sound of a horde of Nomus, and the footsteps of a massive creature, several tons heavy, increasing its pace.

Is that the bear man? Another giant guy? Motherfucking Mount Lady? She briefly wondered about Gigantomachia´s fate after being used as a colossal distraction when the League had attacked Tartarus. She hoped the big guy was okay.

The mercs around Toga flinched as they heard two mighty roars battle, a Nomu´s mindless howl, and the shriek of a bird of prey. By the sound, they were very close.

By the sound, they were pretty fucking big.

“Fuck, we are not getting paid enough to die fighting that. Grab the kid and start the launch seq…” Light beyond the room flooded the wall panels, turning them translucent.

Now Toga could see they were in a large dome with a small opening on the roof. The source of light in front of them was a metal door opened to reveal five figures; a tall man in armour, a bird headed short guy and two women, accompanied by a spectral raven at least twice as tall as the people.

Izu-Izu´s friends were here.

“The mech, for fucks sake! The mech!” the Mafioso abandoned Toga's room, rushing to get Izuku to whatever means of escape they had. *A helicopter, maybe? A VTOL?*

“Boss, what do we do with the girl? Boss? Boss!” one of her guards yelled through his balaclava, completely ignored.

At the entrance, Izuku´s friends were rushing towards the glass prison cells. As they closed in, Toga distinguished the women as Ochako Uraraka and Mei Hatsume. Ochako´s hero suit was torn and covered in blood and Nomu brains, her ridiculous helmet was cracked around one of her eyes, filled with anger and hate.

Hatsume wore a dusty, dirty black mechanic's overall, a thin exoskeleton connecting dark gold thruster gauntlets, a vambrace on her left arm, and sleek armoured boots, which also propelled her forward. Her (clearly inferior) pink hair and creepy eyes were hidden behind a nifty black helmet with gold accents.

As the heroes were some thirty meters away from the cells, a metallic whirr announced a burst of fire from a heavy machine gun. Judging by the size of the bullet holes on the ground it had to be a .50 calibre gun, and it was followed by two seeker missiles.

The heroes´ reaction time was superb; before the machine gun´s shots connected, Iida had thrown Hatsume to the air, had grabbed Ochako and pulled her out of the way, and had kicked the ground with enough momentum and force to break a brick sized piece of cement, launching it at one of the missiles.

Tokoyami had taken to the air as well, gathering his evil spirit under his cloak, banking to the side of the dome as Hatsume threw a grenade at the second missile, catching it in an implosion, turning it into a ball of compressed shrapnel, falling harmlessly to the ground.

Toga turned her head to see the mech, a bipedal tank that would have been right at home in Shigaraki´s tactical espionage videogames. It stood some ten meters tall and eight wide, its legs were thick and mechanical.

The cockpit was sort of T-shaped, and on its right side it had what looked like a rail gun, charging with electricity, aimed directly at Tokoyami. Izu-Izu´s friends were in deep shit.

Mei Hatsume was somewhere between heaven and hell. Heaven, as she witnessed the bipedal tank, that all the inventor forums rumoured as a secret project, come to life in all its glorious metallic power. Hell, as it was currently trying its very best to kill them.

Her assortment of Babies was dangerously low, and ill suited to fight the mechanical beast. A smoke bomb would give them time to strategize, but only if the pilot didn't have thermals. Mei had no EMP weapons, but perhaps she could overload one of her drones to jam the tank´s sensors?

"Baby drones, jam that piece of crap!"

Behind the smokescreen, she caught up with Iida, Tokoyami and Uraraka. "My Babies will give us a few seconds…"

"Tokoyami-kun, we can take it. Ochako, you and Hatsume have to save Izuku!"

Uraraka barely listened and nodded absentmindedly. If Uraraka hadn't been fearsomely capable so far, Mei would have been very worried about her teammate. They may not be the best of friends, but Mei never wanted to see Uraraka like this again.

"Three, two, one, GO!"

Mei sped off towards Izuku´s cell, equipping her last grenade, a chain grenade, and threw it with all her strength at the glass wall. The chains burst out, shattering the panes and making a hole for her to go in. Two goons were hauling Izuku to the back of the cell as she got closer, with a white-haired guy hot at their heels.

Mei looked back and saw Uraraka sprinting towards the other cell. She was going after Toga instead of focusing on rescuing Izuku!

Mei had no time to focus on keeping her friend from murderous, jealous revenge; she had a best friend to rescue, wake up, and equip with a hero suit, so he could punch out the bipedal tank and the big ass Nomu, and so they could all go home and make Babies in peace.

Bursting through the hole in the glass, Mei rocketed towards the unconscious Izuku, barrelling through the armed guards in her way, headbutting one of the goons holding her friend directly in the diaphragm. The merc fell down choking, dropping Izuku to the ground.

Mei blasted both hand thrusters at the chest of the second merc holding Izuku, blasting him at the other guards, taking them down briefly.

"Baby drone explode!" her last drone, a small flyer with four rotors, became a ball of flame and plastic shrapnel. The guards caught fire and were stuck by sharp plastic, a few fell down.

Mei turned to the white-haired guy, who was drawing a pistol from a shoulder holster. Before he could aim, Mei used the grappling hook on her vambrace, catching the man´s forehead, and activated the mechanism, pulling him directly towards her armoured fist. The man´s nose bent and bled, and he fell to the ground stunned.

Grabbing Izuku in a dragging carry, Mei sped away with her boots, aiming for the glass wall. Her exoskeleton would prevent the glass from cutting anything vital, she hoped.

Mei closed her eyes and burst out of the cell, feeling as if a dozen knives cut her back, tearing her overalls to ribbons. She fell over with Izuku still in her arms, a couple dozen meters away from the cell.

Her shoulders burned as she reached over for the pouch with Izuku´s compressed hero suit, which she placed over him and pressed a button, covering her friend with a basic version of his outfit that fitted around him. Now just to wake him up…she had two options; trust her logical side, or her emotional side…

"It´ll have to be next time, Izuku" she said as she injected an adrenalin shot into his neck.

In retrospect she would later tell herself that "true love´s kiss" wasn't a very realistic option to wake up a tranquilized person, and to always trust in science in the future.

Izuku woke up a second later with a start, taking a deep breath and looking around in a daze "Himiko?" he asked as he blinked, looking into Mei´s eyes.

Something hurt for Mei, and it wasn't her broken ribs or the cuts on her back. "It´s Mei, Izuku. We are here to get you back, I´ve got a ton of things to tell you, but we need to get away right now, okay?"

Izuku nodded, blinking a few more times, flexing his right hand a few times, gathering raw power around his fingers. "I´m ready."

Toga squirmed slightly in her chair as a rod of rebar two meters long arced through the glass wall, straight into the chest of a merc beside her. *Fuck! Ochako is hardcore, I may have to re-evaluate my opinion of her…wait, there´s a drop of blood on my cheek…get in, fucking drop!*

Toga tilted her head, trying to get the drop through the duct tape, until she snorted it accidentally. *I guess that´ll do! Transform and roll out, bitches!*

Her Quirk produced the perfect disguise of the merc above her skin, pushing her wrists and ankles painfully as the chains stretched slightly to accommodate her new size, and sticking the duct tape to a coarse black beard.

She didn't bother replicating the clothes and didn't even wait before the transformation was complete before returning to her own skin partially, sliding wrists and ankles through her melting disguise, letting the duct tape fall off.

She was free, and her captors were falling around her, pierced by the makeshift javelins.

In a second, Toga had armed herself with a bayonet and a nightstick from the fallen mercs, and was throwing herself at the two remaining guards, disarming the first quickly and taking down the other with a flying scissor leg.

The disarmed guard tried to take out a knife of his own, but Toga was on him too quickly, controlling his hand with knife and stick to flip away the knife, and break his arm to incapacitate.

Before the guard could react further, she wrapped her arms around his neck, choking him till he passed out.

A huge boulder crashed down on the glass wall, shattering a giant hole on it. Through it walked Uraraka, rebar on her hands, death in her eyes.

Ochako spoke softly at first. “You fucking whore.”

She threw the rebar directly at Toga, using her Quirk to lessen the gravitational pull and make its trajectory straighter, releasing as it neared the target, adding a boost of speed.

Toga spun aside, landing with a somersault and jumping away from the javelin´s second strike. Ochako had tied a wire to the javelin to pull it back quickly. *Clever bitch, you can keep me away like this. Or more accurately, you can bloody well try!*

Toga needed to get close if she had any shot at putting down Uraraka. Non-lethally, for Izu-Izu's sake.

“You stole him from me! You took MY DEKU!”

Toga evaded for less than an inch with a cartwheel.

“WHY?”

The javelin broke the floor behind Toga as she jumped aside.

“You are a murderer! A killer! A MONSTER!”

The javelin winged Toga's thigh, cutting her shorts and opening a shallow cut.

“What is it, Ochako-chan? You are jealous? Am I not supposed to be THE yandere here?”

A toothy smile earned her an inarticulate yell from Ochako, and another scrape from the javelin. *I just have to learn the trajectory…*

“Don’t hate me for being proactive, darling, Hatsume-chan would have swiped him off otherwise. Hell, half of UA could have stolen him with a tiny bit of self-confidence!”

That set Uraraka´s rage off, and she threw with all her strength. A big mistake, as she overshot Toga by a foot, allowing her to step on the javelin and pull the wire, breaking Ochako´s balance and making an opening.

Let´s dance, darling. Five quick steps, a feint and a pirouette, opening with the nightstick, low slash, move under arm, strike the ribs. Feint with knife to the face, strike the knee.

Distract with stick, armlock, apply pressure with dull edge of knife, control arm. Escaped! She´s better than last time, much faster. Block high kick, block knee, block finger contact!

Ruse, knife hand snared with wire! Slight advantage, break fingers.

Uraraka yelled in pain as Toga slammed the nightstick on her fingers, her attempt to remove gravity from Toga interrupted.

“Did meanie Toga give Ocha-chan an ouchie? Who will kiss Ocha-chan´s big, ugly fingers to help them heal?” The enraged hero ignored her Quirk as she got inside Toga´s guard, her thumb going for Toga´s right eye, her leg sweeping and taking them both down.

Toga managed to close her eye before the ugly thumb connected, but it did little to lessen the pain. She heard herself howling “Yes! Scream! Scream louder!”

But pain, no matter how burning, didn’t erase Toga's muscle memory. She kneed Uraraka in the crotch, slipped her leg inside her enemy's guard, and push kicked her stomach, throwing Ochako away.

But not far, as they were still connected by the wire, so Toga moved to disentangle her wrist. The second she was free, Ochako was on her and managed to wrest the bayonet from her hand before they separated.

Two meters apart, both combatants probed each other´s guard with quick jabs and strikes.

Toga knew the next assault would determine the fight, and she was facing an opponent particularly suited to fight her.

A single mistake would end it all. Toga stopped circling around Ochako and launched her attack.

And then the bipedal tank crashed beside them, separating them with the remains of the mech´s rail gun.

Toga clambered over the magnetic coils and jumped at Uraraka, who aimed the knife directly at Toga´s throat. She would bash Ochako´s skull in and get gored in return, like a fat, glorious king against a boar. *Mutually assured destruction, Ochako-chan!*

“Himiko wait!”

“Ochako, no!”

Toga didn’t feel the cold steel of Uraraka´s knife open her neck. She didn’t feel the spray of blood and grey matter on her hands from smashing Uraraka´s skull.

What she felt was a strong back stopping her body from moving on, soft green hair tickling her face, an armoured hand crushing her wrist.

With a twist of her arm her weapon was taken away in a black and white glove, just as the person who had stood in front of her turned around and caught her in his strong arms.

“Izu-Izu?”

The knife had stabbed his right arm and gone through. “It´s just a glancing blow, could you pull it out? It´s at an awkward angle…” He smiled sheepishly.

Toga complied, pulling the weapon out in one smooth motion. “Wahhhh!” he yelped. “One of these pockets should have a bandage…”

“GET AWAY FROM HIM! DEKU! STOP”

Uraraka yelled at them as Iida restrained her gently.

“Ochako, that´s enough! You need to focus! You are a hero, damnit! We need you, I need you!” That managed to calm her down enough to stop screaming, at least.

“Izuku, there is still fifteen Nomus by my last count, including a very large one. Tokoyami-kun has a broken leg, you saw Hatsume´s condition, and now Ochako has a broken hand and a sprained ankle. Todoroki-kun and Yaoyorozu-chan may not be able to reach us before the Nomus. We can take them on?”

“Tenya, you can´t even open your left eye because of all the blood from that cut, you should stay

here. Himiko, can you fight?"

I can´t even open my eye but I can still kill, baby. "Any time, my love" *This may be new, but I do need something to make you blush, Izu-Izu.*

"Perfect…I have a plan."

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! All kudos and comments are very much appreciated!

He protecc, he atacc, he did what to that Nomu´s back?

Chapter Notes

> For this chapter, the mood is a bit in the style of "Rip and Tear" from the DOOM soundtrack.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The blast door bent inward, a fist marking the metal. Izuku assessed the situation one more time; Todoroki´s team was too far away; Ochako´s Quirk use was halved due to her broken hand, and was clearly too emotional to be of much help; Iida looked sickly pale and had a nasty head cut splitting his eyebrow, so Izuku preferred to keep him behind to guard the injured; Tokoyami´s leg was shattered in several places, affecting his concentration and thus his control of Dark Shadow… another good last line of defence; Mei had gone way beyond and risked life and limb to get him back, with little regard for her own safety, and was covered in cuts and bruises.

Fourteen normal Nomus and one that had been too much for Dark Shadow…

Izuku deduced the artificial human had to be loaded with enhancement Quirks to even keep up. *Bring it on, then.* Izuku had already faced the larger bipedal tank with Iida and Tokoyami´s help, destroying it just in time to stop Toga and Uraraka from ending each other, and by that point all the mercenaries in the dome were down, some impaled on Uraraka´s javelins, many knocked out, a few crushed below the tank.

The loss of life was tragic, but by this point Izuku considered the mission against Pestilentia war, and knowing what he had done to Himiko made it VERY personal.

Himiko herself had a hurt eye and various bruises, but Izuku had spent every waking moment with her for...how long had it been?

It felt like months and months, but it had been just over six weeks since they had left Florida, his birthday was still some three weeks away…It felt like he had spent much more time with Toga.

And they could fight well together.

Izuku helped get the wounded behind the destroyed mech, assisting Tokoyami as he limped and carrying Mei gently to the safe area. “Kick that Nomu´s ass, Izuku” she said with a weak smile.

“Himiko, you ready?”

“Yeah, let me just get a weapon. What´s the plan, Izu-Izu?”

“We lure as many as we can to that side and collapse the roof on them, we pick the survivors. I´ve got the big one.”

“Sounds good!” She pulled a combat knife from a fallen merc´s tactical vest, twirling it with skill “Ready.”

They approached the blast door, standing in the open to lure the Nomus. Finally, the door gave way and the artificial humans streamed in. Averaging on a height of two meters, the majority of the

Nomus seemed generic and nowhere near the power of the USJ Nomu or High End, the Nomu Endeavor had beaten.

“Hey you! You are all going down! Know why? Cause I, Deku, am here!”

Fifteen Nomus locked eyes on him and started to run. “Hey, smooth-brains, get over here! We´ll fuck you up! Exposed organs are no match for us, we´re fucking unstoppable together!” yelled Toga.

The Nomus snarled in response and ran faster…directly where they wanted them. Izuku aimed his hand at the roof and unleashed a dangerous amount of One for All at it. The concrete shattered and fell, catching the artificial humans just as planned.

Two small Nomus kept charging at them, missed by the crash, and from the rubble the Nomu Titan emerged with a roar “Those two are yours!” said Izuku as he leapt into battle.

The big Nomu moved like a person three times smaller, but his power was definitely proportional to his size. In seven of Izuku´s steps and three of the Nomu´s they met, the artificial human striking with a punch, the hero with a flying kick.

The Shoot Style kick matched the Nomu´s strength and gave Izuku several options. *Sir Nighteye´s predictions; Nomu will attack with other arm, attempt to crush with foot. Gran Torino´s mobility, slide between the arms.* As he fought, he wasn’t just Izuku, he was the goddamn Deku, his technique absorbed from teachers and companions into a solid, powerful system.

Up close, Deku had the upper hand. *Tsuyu´s jump, Ojiro´s kickboxing knee strike!* The knee connected with a rib as thick as his bicep, shattering it, only to watch it return to place instantly.

Regeneration, slight damage absorption, giant size…show your hand, Nomu! Deku launched himself upwards using a kick at a lower rib, reaching above the Nomu´s head and striking with a spin kick directly into the Nomu´s eye. The gelatinous orb exploded around his armoured boot.

But the Nomu capitalized on the distance to his opponent and threw a bite at Deku, catching the hero´s other leg. Its teeth were jagged metal, the blades tearing Deku´s leg muscles as he shook the hero around, like a dog with a squeaky toy.

Knife teeth, that explains why he kept his mouth shut. Before the Nomu could grab him or bite him further, Deku pulled himself towards the trapped leg and delivered a powerful punch at the artificial human´s teeth, smashing them to bits and freeing his leg.

Deku fell away, adjusting his body to roll upon landing, avoiding the injured leg. The roll was successful, and he put a couple of meters between himself and the Nomu, but it wasn’t enough distance, and he was caught by a massive fist smashing against his entire torso.

The punch launched him into the air, where a second haymaker caught him. When he landed a foot was already slamming down to crush him.

Deku rolled away and got up to a crouch. There was no punching the Nomu like All Might would have done in his prime, he had to be ruthless, merciless, and exploit every weakness. “Air force smash!” a jet of air ruptured the Nomu´s other eye, cracking the exposed skull around it.

The blinded Nomu just switched its stance from the basic brawler´s guard he had been using previously to cover its exposed brain with his left hand. *Doesn’t depend on eyesight. Understands own weakness…completely sentient?* The first High End had been able to articulate basic sentences when fighting Endeavor…

One arm to protect you will not be enough.

One for All strengthened his injured leg enough to leap at the Nomu, feinting right and going left with all the speed the Quirk allowed, getting behind the artificial human. The Nomu´s physiology was basically human, so Deku could immobilise it through the spine.

Deku spread his fingers in a karate chop gesture, aimed directly above the Nomu´s belt, and speared its back with the power of One for All. His hand passed through skin and muscle, and as he connected with the spine he balled his fist again and punched even harder. The vertebra offered about as much resistance as ten centimetres of steel and was displaced completely.

The punch severed the spinal cord and cut through nerves and blood vessels. With one sharp motion, Deku drew back his arm, leaving the Nomu paralyzed below the waist. Its legs wobbled, and it collapsed backwards, letting go of its head to use both hands to catch Deku, but it was too slow, and Deku had jumped backwards in time.

Beyond the Nomu´s reach, Deku limped to stand in front of its head, aimed his hands at the artificial human´s shoulders and flicked two simultaneous Air Force Delaware Smashes at it.

The collarbone shattered, and the shoulders sagged, letting both arms fall to the ground. The Nomu was defeated.

Deku looked at his hands; Mei´s gloves had withstood the increased power he had needed to take the Nomu down.

The fight over, Izuku let his legs crumple under him and found himself sitting with his back leaning on a concrete boulder. “Izu-Izu!” yelled Toga as she pushed a man in a crimson suit to the ground to run to Izuku´s side. “Are you hurt? I killed the other Nomus and captured their wrangler. Your leg…we have to get you to a doctor!”

“The others need it more, I´m okay!”

“Like hell you are, I´m bandaging that!” Toga tore the bottom of her shirt and tied it around the wound, making it bleed less.

From the door Izuku could hear a group of people running. He tried to get up, but his leg couldn’t support his weight. Toga stood in front of him protectively “Don’t worry, Izu-Izu, nobody´s taking you away, they´d have to kill me first.”

But it wasn’t an enemy force, it was Shouto and Momo! Accompanied by more heroes, his friends rushed to his side. Shouto reached him first and, after looking at Toga with distrust, he knelt beside Izuku.

With a reassuring smile, he said “We are here, Izuku, the base is ours. We have medics a couple minutes away. It´s alright, brother.” Izuku felt relief wash over him and he laid down to wait.

It was over.

The Shieldmaiden Hero Freya was more familiar with violence and its consequences than she might have liked.

At 28, she was the top hero of the Nordic Confederation and had ended at least seven major crises, the Fimbulwinter Event had nearly started a new Ice Age before she stopped the villains, the secret plot known underwhelmingly as the "Fisherman´s War", stopping the terrorist group "Svartalf" … this fight against Pestilentia felt just as important.

Hiding a military base in the middle of Denmark, unseen by the Confederation intelligence and filled to the brim with mercenaries…the man wasn't the second most wanted man in the world without reason.

After reaching the base´s centre, a large dome used to house a bipedal tank and a few other vehicles, Freya had been pleasantly surprised by the Japanese team´s performance, having cleared the entire base themselves with no casualties. The bipedal tank and the large artificial human they found, beaten, gave Freya a sense of wonder for the young heroes´ abilities. UA was still making quality heroes, obviously.

As the American´s reinforcements arrived and took the young heroes away for medical care, it was up to the Scandinavians to search the base for any useful intel.

Sadly, it was of little use. Every computer had been scrubbed clean of data, and no physical records were found. Even the highest-ranking militia had never had contact with Pestilentia himself, so spoken testimonies would help them little. And the man in charge of the base, a white-haired man described by the female prisoner, a girl with fangs and yellow eyes, had apparently escaped quietly as the heroes fought bigger threats.

Sadly, the only thing they found were the corpses of heroes and government agents, presumed missing years back, their hero suits faded and clinging to their bones. Freya almost cried as she found a short, stocky corpse covered in heavy armour, its beard decaying away.

It had been her friend, Khuzdul, believed to have died at sea in a storm. The Dwarven Hero would at last be put to rest, at least, and his family could properly grieve.

As she carried her friend´s remains to the outside, she saw the tall Japanese kid in armour, his forehead bandaged, barring the way for the brunette girl in the bloodied pink costume, not letting her go after the girl they had rescued. Freya had a good eye for grudges and bad blood, and there was definitely some there. Both teen heroes stopped their argument as she walked past them.

Beyond the medical tents the American strike force had erected was an open area designated for the coroner, to humanely treat with the battle´s casualties. It had been very lucky that no hero had fallen, but the dead prisoners had started to fill the rest of the space. She placed Khuzdul gently on a body bag and could feel tears burning in her eyes as she closed it.

After that she walked to the command tent, where a Navy SEAL´s commander and the hero Holy Diver, who Freya now knew was called Anna Dobinek, were arguing out loud "…we were supposed to deploy to Kenya, not to clean up after heroes in Europe! The Department of Defense will hear about this! I don't care if your boss is God´s own errand boy, my SEALs are not your servants to be cleaning up shit."

Holy Diver started an angry response but was interrupted "I don't care to hear your opinion, Spook, get outta my tent."

Dobinek strode out in anger, almost bumping with Freya "Fuck, sorry, I almost crashed with you. Do you have to go there? Cause that man´s an asshole. Though he may treat other people slightly better, he takes Green Beret-SEALs rivalry too seriously and might hate me for it."

“No, I actually was looking for you, there is a satellite phone for us in the comm tent.”

“That may be just what I need, I prefer the boss telling me to deal with paperwork than a one-star general pulling rank like a fucking L.T. straight out of West Point.”

“I did not understand that reference, but I see you are frustrated. Would you like cold Finnish vodka afterwards? We have a good bottle in the helicopter!”

“Hell yeah, I´m down for that. Lets go take that call.”

The video call started a minute after they arrived at the comm tent, showing some sort of old cowboy. Was that still how American men dressed?

“Good to see you made it, Anna. We´re pulling you back out of Europe, take Midoriya's team plane and put them back in Japan. I´ll meet you there, we need to regroup and get some focus. And get Midoriya´s friends away from the mission, they altered the rescue plan so much…I am not a spy for my love of paperwork, goddamnit. So, y´all keep the kids not in our team out, capiche?"

He paused, and then said "The Ochacho girl especially, Toga may be expendable, but not “dies in a death duel between jealous girls” expendable. And offer the Hastume girl a job. What else? Oh well, I´ll let you get to it, I have to yell at some SecDef idiots. Have a good day, Anna.”

“Well, Holy Diver…vodka?”

“Yeah, I´m not the one flying that hypersonic plane anyway.”

Chapter End Notes

I´m sorry if that was too brutal on that Nomu...
Thanks for reading as always!

Dreams and Suffering

Chapter Notes

> In which I shall start to explain why Ochako acts the way she does, and a brief glimpse into a pretty big past moment for Izuku, Bakugou and Shigaraki.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku found himself in a Chinese People´s Liberation Army helicopter, Kacchan by his side, Shigaraki sitting across them. Intensive medical and psychiatric treatment had made the ex-villain look much healthier, he acted like a completely different person.

Shigaraki had somehow convinced Tsukauchi to let him fight All for One and return to prison afterwards, his argument helped by Nejire Hadou, who had visited and spoken with the ex-villain for hours and hours.

The hunt for All for One had started the instant he had flown out of Tartarus, interrupted a week after by the typhoon hitting Okinawa and resumed a few days later.

Midoriya and Bakuguou had been in the vanguard of the investigation, performing reconnaissance, arrests, detective work…even paperwork. Aizawa-sensei, as part of the investigation, had been quite lenient with classwork, allowing them to concentrate on protecting Japan instead of stressing about finals.

The Hero Net had been on high alert on a global scale, and finally, three weeks after the escape, All for One was found in a fortified temple amidst the “floating islands” of Hunan Province, China. Supported by a sect of wind monks, the supervillain was lying as low as possible, not ready to fight the world yet.

In a week, Izuku, Bakugou and Shigaraki had joined up with the Chinese Dragon Twins, Shang and Ling, the top heroes of the People's Republic, as well as a support team of special forces soldiers, and were ready to strike.

The Dragon Twins flew along the helicopters as they neared the temple, and a minute out, Izuku felt his phone vibrate.

He wasn’t supposed to even have signal in the middle of the mountains, so he expected no notification from the Hero Net. Kacchan´s phone sounded as well, his ringtone, a little anime witch yelling “bakuretsu bakuretsu lalala…EXPLOSION!”

Pulling out their phones, the heroes saw the face of All for One. Around them, the special forces soldiers were seeing the same in combat tablets and support equipment and were reacting with bewilderment.

The supervillain spoke “Heroes, villains, citizens. You know who I am. I apologize for the quality of the image, this broadcast Quirk is a very recent acquisition, and the monks who were kind enough to shelter me had only a small camcorder." He let out a laugh.

"I have a few words for my friends: Cenotaph, Farmhouse, Storm, Hail, God's Eye, Simple,

Execute. Thank you for all your help all these years, Dima, I consider you a true brother. Now all of you, people of the world, hear me. The time of chaos is finally upon us. Events are in motion now, and the society you know is in a straight path to the grave. Will you join me in a new world, or perish in the old?"

"One for All, come on, let us end this. I will enjoy crushing you again, this time for good."

Izuku could only remember the fight in snapshots. A thunderstorm raged around the island cliffs, called upon by the monk´s Quirks.

The Dragon Twin Shang killed by his own fire breathing quirk, stolen away by All for One, melted into a rock spire.

Kacchan's limbs bent in unnatural directions as he laid down, defeated and broken amidst the temple ruins.

The monks' elemental powers tearing apart the soldiers. All for One standing above him, his remaining arm turned into an obsidian spider leg. The spires and cliffs flattened into a crater hundreds of meters wide.

All for One's femur protruding from his thigh and dripping blood to the ground, how he placed his weight on a footless leg. All for One's Italian dress shoe, a foot inside, discarded a few meters away. Shigaraki's yell as he placed his hands over All for One's face.

Izuku and Shigaraki had stood amidst All for One's ashes as the medevac chopper arrived. "You didn't think I would just let you go, did you, Midoriya?"

The voice coming from Shigaraki's mouth wasn't his own. *Pestilentia, can't even let me have a normal nightmare, huh?*

"Shigaraki" was attacking a second later, but Izuku was ready. One punch to the head was all it took, in a dream One for All had no limits. "Unless you want to tell me more stories, you're gonna let me sleep, villain!"

A whisper on his ear replied "I guess I did have a bit of fun with your memories, incomplete as they were. I'll give you a little wake up."

Above, a single plane flew against the sunrise. A missile detached from one of its wings, falling down to the earth.

And then, it exploded.

The light burned Izuku's eyes, the sound made him deaf. The explosion expanded instantly and engulfed him. He felt his skin burn off in a millisecond, his muscles and organs boil and dissolve. His bones turned to dust.

His conscience was suddenly well aware of every molecule of his being, obliterated one by one. He felt himself become smaller and smaller, until he was a single atom. Izuku felt his last atom split…and he woke up.

His throat was sore, as if he had been shouting. His heart was beating fast and his breathing was shallow. From a door burst in his mom, tears in her eyes, followed by All Might. "Izuku!" in a moment she was by his side.

"It was a nightmare…it felt so real. I have to tell the agents, mom."

“Can it wait for a while? We want to make sure you are okay?”

She hadn’t even finished talking when Toga rushed him on the other side, holding his hand. “Izu-Izu…it’s alright” she said softly, a knowing glint in her eyes.

“How long did I sleep, anyway?” All Might answered

“Almost a full day, but your leg is fully healed. Recovery Girl even told us that your arm bones are looking sturdier than last check-up.”

“How are my friends?”

“All recovering, young Iida took young Uraraka away to eat. The Americans wanted a word with all of you by the end of the week, when all are healed.”

“That is great, I´m happy they are alright. I guess they´ll want some answers soon?” His mom nodded "Hisashi is also asking for you, he is in the lobby."

"Tell him he can wait for the press release, I'll talk with him then. If he can stay in Japan that long, at least." He was still so bitter...

Inko accepted it, and continued “We also want to talk more, when you are feeling better and are well rested, your friends can see you after that. And I mean talking alone with my son, Toga. I also want to give you a talk when possible.”

Toga looked more afraid of his mom than when she had fought Nomus and could only nod weakly. “Mom, would you give us a few minutes, please? I haven’t been able to talk to Himiko much since we got away, I was out most of the time.”

“Of course, son. We are both outside if you need anything.” His parents left the room, closing the door behind them. Toga took the chance to get up on his bed and cuddle next to him. Luckily the hospital had given her some scrubs instead of the half-open gown Izuku wore, so he could concentrate on actually talking to her.

“Izu-Izu, you woke up screaming. I was here as soon as the doctors cleared me, and I saw you sleep peacefully for more than twelve hours. I left twenty minutes ago to get some ramen and when I was returning, I could hear it from the elevator. Was it the dream?”

“Yeah, and it all ties with Pestilentia. And to you. And in the dream, I died from a nuclear bomb. I felt it all, I was so scared!” Tears had started falling from his eyes and Himiko hugged him, her grasp just making the tears flow even more.

“Shh, shh…its alright, Izu-Izu. I´m not leaving you. I´ll hold you until you feel better, okay?”

As his breathing became normal and the sobs stopped, Izuku separated a bit, sitting up in the bed. “I have actually had nightmares end like that too, Izu-Izu. How is all this connected?”

Izuku took a deep breath and started “Pestilentia´s Quirk is dream control. He makes a substance that gets in the brain and lets him communicate with parts of it, even manipulating it. He is the source of your nightmares, of the voices in your head. He has been inside your mind since he had you kidnapped fourteen years ago.

"His men injected me with the substance and put me to sleep in the base, and he is now in my head, too. And he told me everything they did to you. I´m never letting anyone hurt you again, Himiko. You are not a monster, and I want to help you more than ever. I will be here for you. I…I love

you.”

Inko Midoriya fidgeted with her hands outside her son´s hospital room. She had grown to accept the idea that her son would put his life on the line as a hero, and that every method to mitigate the dangers was being used; his friend Hatsume making his suit stronger and more resistant, him getting extra training with his teachers and other pro heroes, getting him to slow down and analyse the battle before rushing in.

It still made Inko´s heart ache seeing him injured, but getting congratulated by Recovery Girl on Izuku´s “progress into injuring himself less” made it a bit better.

Perhaps the real stress came from her thoughts on Toga. The incomplete archive had painted her as a dangerous individual, connected to a kidnapping and dozens of criminal acts. However, it clashed completely with the sad, lonely girl that had stayed by Izuku´s bedside, waiting for him to wake up.

She had spoken to a few of her son´s friends, his teammates. Tenya had been polite and honest, and seemed quite shook by the mission, Inko knew he needed to speak with Izuku to completely vent his feelings.

Shouto had been very open on his belief that Izuku knew what he was doing, and he had told Inko that he would have felt a hypocrite criticizing his friend, as his own brother had also been a villain. If he could believe redemption for his brother was possible, he could not doubt Izuku.

Momo and Tsuyu had both expressed their concern for Izuku but wanted to hear his thoughts before even thinking to judge him. Fumikage had simply told her “not everything dwelling in the shadows is evil”

The other two girls had been a different story. Inko knew they both had feelings for her son; Ochako had never acted on her feelings, Mei had perhaps not been aware of them; the poor child seemed as clueless about feelings and social interactions as she was masterful in engineering.

Mei had been quite closed with her, barely conversational. Afterwards, her father had confided in Inko and told her that his daughter felt betrayed by Izuku not telling her anything, and very confused at all the situation.

Ochako had refused to talk to her, perhaps out of shame. Inko just didn’t know why the girl had never told Izuku her feelings. It had been plain to see for the mother, and she knew Izuku had reciprocated those feelings for a time.

Until one day, on his second year, he had told his mother that Ochako seemed to start becoming uncomfortable around him and to start being distant.

Inko could now empathize with the girl; being in love was very intimidating for her, she could understand becoming anxious and bottling up feelings.

But Inko hadn’t yet started a relationship with Toshinori, and in that moment of her life, she was bitter and disillusioned. All she could think of when her son told her of his problem, was of Hisashi drifting away from her life, leaving her alone raising a child.

To this day she regretted not having been able to help her son, she regretted having reacted in pain and perhaps poisoning what could have been a beautiful relationship, if she had just encouraged her

son.

Ochako had kept her distance out of a crush, and if it wasn't for Tenya and Tsuyu, maybe Inko´s words might have completely ended her son´s friendship with the girl, distant as it had become.

By the third year, Ochako had stopped coming to the Midoriya house, except in the few occasions her son invited the whole team. On the last semester, Inko had hoped against hope to see Ochako a bit more, thinking the girl might feel time running out and act, but it had been in vain.

Izuku hadn't seemed to care much when she had chosen to go to the graduation party with Tenya instead, but Inko felt she would never really know the answer.

After asking for advice with Ochako, Izuku had never again confided in his mother like that. Had Inko severed the trust her son had in her? Had her fear finally been too much for him?

She had found out about Toga from Toshinori, and apparently, they had been on what could pretty much be called a long-distance relationship for months by the time Izuku had told him. Softly, she said. "Toshi, I think all of this is my fault."

"Inko, what do you mean? Izuku is alright and if anything, it is my fault for not being able to do more to help."

"Toshi, you do more than anyone could ever ask for. You have already helped everyone so much…helped me so much. But just listen, okay? I…I think I made have caused what got young Ochako like this. I think I lost Izuku´s trust and my advice hurt him. I…I´ll just tell you, alright?" She told him everything that had happened, why she had done it, how it had changed her son, subtly but importantly.

"Inko…you can not blame yourself for that. I know that Izuku trusts you and he will open up to you if you ask him. As for young Uraraka, I promise I will speak with her. But please don't blame yourself for her actions, ignoring her feelings was her own decision. Or for Izuku´s, he…he went through a lot on his second year. I wish I could have helped him more with uh…girls, but…eh… you were actually my first girlfriend" he said, blushing completely.

"Their training ramped up and the League of Villains cast a very dark shadow, and after All for One escaped Izuku had the fear and feelings of failure added to his own personal frustration. And then he met Toga and talked her into turning herself in, and the rest we both know. None of this is your fault, or mine, as hard to say as that is. All we can do is connect again with our boy and help him make good decisions in the future."

They stared into each other's eyes and Inko felt at peace. The regrets were still there, but she could always do better as a person, as a mother, as she kept growing and learning. And she would have a tall, awkward, kind superhero by her side to face it all.

From the room they heard Izuku start to speak with more confidence. They could hear a phrase or two, until he said "…love you."

And Inko felt the tears stream down from her eyes. But Izuku didn't stop speaking. He told the story of a little girl, taken from the arms of her murdered parents, brainwashed and trained into a merciless killer, traded like a sack of grain between villains, stripped of memory and placed in a hostile environment, where mere survival led her to violence, escape and crime.

And Inko felt sorry for Himiko Toga. She felt sorry for Ako.

Chapter End Notes

The drama doesn´t end yet! Thanks for reading, see you next chapter!

Knowing her own backstory

Chapter Notes

> I´ll be editing some of the past chapters for a bit more format and some mood music suggestions as well!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Himiko Toga listened intently to Izuku telling her the life she had forgotten, the life Pestilentia and All for One had taken from her. It all made sense. All those nightmares, all those half-remembered memories…it all fit together. She could see how her skills had to be the result of that kind of training.

And the names…she could almost hear a kind woman´s voice calling her Ako to calm her on a stormy night. It brought tears to her eyes to know that she would never hear that voice again, and it would stay just in the edge of her memory.

It was heart-breaking to know that she´d had a family who loved her, to know they had been murdered just for being around her, to know her life had been stolen because of her Quirk, that she had been moulded like an object, a weapon.

It angered her, but it somehow gave her hope. Izuku knew all of this and had just told her he loved her. She wasn't alone, and she could get her life together just like she had been doing.

When Izuku finished telling her, she was actually feeling better. She wanted blood and revenge, but she felt much more comfortable with all of this. She had living family, she might even reunite with them at some point. She was feeling better.

"Thank you for this, Izu-Izu…it actually gives me some hope, you know?" They stayed together for a long while, cuddling comfortably.

"Himiko, I think we are going to have to talk to everyone eventually…"

"But not right now. Right now, you are all for me, Izu-Izu, and I´m not gonna let you get away from this hug anytime soon!" She gave him a mischievous smile and tightened her grip around him.

But from outside the sounds of footsteps and chatter took their attention. "…the press, ma´am, the doctors said The Deku was awake, we´re gonna interview him."

All Might's deep voice answered in exasperation, "My boy was injured and needs rest, miss reporter. Please give us space."

"All Might, we almost didn't see you here! So good to meet again! Can you give us a statement? Is it true the hero Deku is in a relationship with…"

Inko Midoriya's stressed voice interrupted "Miss, with all due respect, leave us alone, there is police presence in this hospital and we will call them. My son can have interviews when he is released!"

“What was that?” asked Izuku “Relationship?” Toga was quite confused “What relationship, Izu-Izu?” her tone becoming just slightly threatening.

“They probably mean you.”

“Oh shit, that could be it. So, we are in a relationship?”

“We've lived together for more than a month, Himiko, we pretty much are. So, you want to be my girlfriend officially?”

“YES, YES, I've always wanted that!”

A very worried Inko Midoriya entered the room, asking “I heard shouting, are you okay?” Toga turned to look at Izuku, who was blushing hard

“We´re alright mom! And thank you for not letting the press in, I´d rather speak to them wearing actual clothes!” Inko left with a smile, her gaze lingering on Toga slightly with…pity? Toga didn’t give it more thought, she was getting a talk with the mother later and she could worry later. Right now, she was happy.

About half an hour later a doctor walked in, accompanied by the policeman Izu-Izu had spoken about, Tsukauchi, now the commissioner for the entire Tokyo area.

“Midoriya, the Americans already told us everything they could about the situation, but we thought you might want a bit of an update on the Japanese side.”

“Good to see you, commissioner. The Americans told you about Himiko, right? Cause I am not about to let her go in chains.”

“Actually, Midoriya, this is about the public perception of it. Your possible relationship was exposed, and the press are demanding an explanation. The Americans can probably coach you on that better than I, I may be flexible, but this is beyond me, Izuku. I´m having a meeting with a senior agent later today, a Holden Johns, I hope we can clear everything up there."

He looked at Toga, not quite as judgementally as she would have expected "Toga, while all of this goes down, you will not be allowed to leave the hospital. As you are technically an American prisoner, we can't arrest you, and the issue of your sentence is above my paygrade. You are safe, and Midoriya trusts you, so I will trust you too, but if you perform any crime here, my officers WILL take you down. So, behave. And Izuku?”

“Yes, commissioner?”

“Congratulations to you both, you look cute together”

The policeman left, and the doctor took her turn “Midoriya-san, your leg injury is healing on schedule, we expect you to be in good condition by the morning, when you may leave the hospital. By order of Recovery Girl, we will require you to check back with us in a week, to clear you completely. You are instructed to rest and recuperate." The doctor adjusted her glasses, with a glint that Toga had no idea happened outside of anime.

"You, Miss Toga, thankfully have not left this closed off floor. We were told to register you under an alias, “Isana Shiranui”, so please do keep a low profile. We can provide you with some clothes and a facemask, so you stand out less, but please stay on this floor. The agents will probably talk to you in a while, I think. Should I tell the nurse to bring you food, too?” After Toga nodded, the doctor left.

“Do I have an Isana face, Izu-Izu?” she pouted.

“Not really!” he laughed in reply.

“Wanna take a nap? I´m really sleepy, Izuku…”

“Sure” *Hell yeah, let me cuddle up real close…You actually look great in a hospital gown, Izu-Izu, it doesn’t cover much…goddamn exhaustion.*

Their nap lasted a couple of hours, and after that Toga left to have a shower in her room. Izuku called his mom over, he was ready to talk.

“Son, I´m sorry, we overheard you telling her the story. I´m really sorry, I was judging Toga without knowing her entire story. I…I can see why you want to help her, the way she looks at you…I think you really bring some good out of her. She scares me a little and I really don’t want to see you get hurt, Izuku, but I trust you.”

Both Inko and All Might pulled him into a hug “We are here for you, my boy, and we will always be. But we need you to tell us everything right now.”

Toga Himiko stepped out of the shower, drying herself with the towel provided by the hospital. The clothes the nurse had given her were plain and boring; a grey t-shirt, too big, but not big enough to look cute, grey sweatpants, again a size too big, and some cheap looking felt slippers. It was better than hospital clothes, at least.

She looked at herself in the mirror, she was starting to need a haircut; her bangs were growing uneven and getting in front of her eyes. She put on some makeup, mostly eyeliner. *Izu-Izu always gets so cute when he notices my eyes, and this helps!* And she noticed how much she was smiling, it felt much more like her “old self” as a villain, in the good times, at least.

A knock on the door stopped her from rambling on in her mind, and when she answered she found Inko Midoriya outside.

“May I come in, Toga?”

She just nodded. Inko took a seat on one of the chairs and Toga joined her, the bed wasn’t the place for a serious conversation.

“I think you know what I want to talk about, yes?”

“I do. It is about Izuku”

“It is, child. My son is the most important person in my life, and his happiness is more valuable to me than my own life. I raised him basically on my own for more than ten years, after Hisashi started staying away for longer and longer periods of time and he just became a name on a bank transfer every month or two. Did Izuku tell you about his father and me?”

“He told me when we met in Florida about his father showing up on his graduation, and how little he was in his life. I just listened, I…the only family I had, the only family I remember, was the

League of Villains, and we all know we weren't exactly stable. Izuku told you what the villain told him? About me? Do you think it is true, Mrs. Midoriya?"

"He told us. I don't know…the police are investigating. Do you remember any of this life he said you had?"

"Only in nightmares and half-remembered fragments, some sounds, an image or two."

"I don't think I can judge a victim of such horrors, but I can acknowledge that you are guilty of crimes, have blood on your hands. I can accept you if you really become the person who Izuku sees when he looks at you, but the law is not as lenient as me. Can you tell me about this mission for the Americans?"

"They wanted us to hunt down the villain Pestilentia, kill him if needed. They offered to reduce my sentence and get me psychiatric help, Izuku agreed because he thinks I am worth saving. And to the Americans it wouldn't be a big setback if I died, I think I´ve been a cheap asset so far. And now we learn the Pestilentia is the one who, well…made me, so we are going to take him down."

"So, I assume that after this, you are going to jail anyway?"

Toga sighed. Freedom had tasted so good this time she had been with Izuku. Jail would probably be hell, but if Izuku visited, she thought she might have enough will to serve her sentence. "Yes. Izu-Izu had talked me into turning myself in just a bit before All for One hijacked every screen in Asia and activated my sleeper agent programming, and I still want to atone with the law."

"Alright, that is good. Now, I want to talk about you and my son´s relationship." Toga gulped. *Is this the bad part? Is she going to make us break up? We´ve been a couple less than a day!*

"Don't worry, I´m not about to tell you to break up. My son is an adult now, and, as much as it hurts me, he is more than qualified to make his own decisions. And to face their consequences. But I´ll tell you one thing: I will never forgive you if you hurt my son. Izuku has already been through enough trauma, growing up without a father figure, without a Quirk in a society with heavy bias against the Quirkless, being bullied by his best friend…even I have done harm to him, by not being the support he needed. He deserves better, I want him to be happy. For both of our sakes, Toga, I hope you make him happy."

The green haired woman´s calm tone scared her more than the police and most heroes. "Mrs. Midoriya, I love your son. And I mean "love", not a crush at first sight or the admiration for a true hero who looks good when injured, I…my feelings are stronger, stronger than any brainwashing, any torture, any pain.

"Izuku…he is the first person who asked why I did what I did, and instead of just trying to kill me or put me in chains, he wanted to help. He doesn't see me as a monster. He makes me want to be a good person, a better person. He makes me feel appreciated, important, valid. He makes me laugh. I love him."

"Alright, Toga. You sound sincere. Take care of my son, and don´t make me regret the trust I will give you. Now give me a hug and call me Inko, and I´m gonna call you Himiko."

With the hug, the stress of the conversation was gone. Toga hadn't realized how much she had needed a mom hug, and she even sobbed a little. Izuku had definitely inherited his mother´s talent in comforting people. "And now I´m going to make sure you know about contraceptive methods, I don't want grandkids yet."

Hospitals did not make good cold soba. Shouto slurped the subpar soup disappointedly as he sat on a waiting room he shared with Iida, Momo and Tsuyu, who had just returned from visiting Tokoyami. The bird headed hero would take the rest of the week to heal from his broken leg, while the rest were pretty much all healed.

Hatsume had left an hour before, both bored out of her mind and pissed off at the instructions not to scratch her back, as the scars from broken glass were apparently extremely itchy. Shouto guessed she would return soon with two dozen puzzles, or a half-broken computer to rebuild, or maybe some weird foreign snacks.

Or all of the above.

Uraraka had not left her room except when Iida had dragged her out for food. Shouto had never seen her like this, and he frankly didn't know what to make of it. Why was Uraraka acting with such jealousy for Izuku, when she had clearly distanced herself from the boy for some time? Shouto still had a hard time understanding some people…maybe Momo and Izuku being the exception?

Iida had been practically holding Uraraka together this last day and a half, and he looked tired enough for two. "Iida, you alright there? You look a blink away from a nap."

He replied without his usual enthusiasm or arm motions "I´m fine, Todoroki-kun, I just need to stay awake if anyone needs me."

"It will be fine, Tenya, just take a nap. Uraraka will be alright for half an hour, don't worry." Iida looked too tired to argue and just nodded, plumping down on the couch. Tsuyu took his glasses carefully and placed them on a nearby table, the speedy hero didn't even react. In a few minutes he was snoring softly.

"So, are they bringing Izuku to us first or the Agency guys? Or both?" asked Tsuyu. Shouto didn't know, but fortunately, someone knocked on the door. It was Hatsume and the tall American who had flown the plane back to Japan.

Shouto had talked to her just two or three times, and she had seemed capable and disciplined, and completely done with the bullshit she probably experienced as a government agent. He didn't remember her name or the hero name that had been given, so he just slurped on his soup instead of greeting the agent.

She spoke to them in English "Hey y´all, me and the boss are meeting with your government in an hour, when we´re done we'll send Midoriya your way. Tomorrow we´ll have our meeting with all of you, decide what to do. My boss wants you away from our mission and from our asset, the Toga girl." That sounded bad...

"I think you guys are useful and could probably help us in another way. Anyway, I´m around if you want to discuss any Agency business or if you want food from outside. I'm on the night guard shift with Freya, feel free to ask us anything. I´ll leave you to it, and Hatsume, our offer stands, do consider it."

Hatsume just shrugged and took a seat, taking out a pen and a notebook and starting to draw something. "So, who´s gonna go get Uraraka? She´d probably try and kill me if I go."

Shouto volunteered, “I´ll go get her, we should all be here.”

Tsuyu then said, “We should let Fumikage rest, I can tell him everything later.”

“Alright, I´ll go and get our friend.”

The hospital was quiet in the night, the hallways empty. In the other waiting room, he could faintly hear the quiet voices of All Might and Izuku´s mother. He still wasn’t used to seeing his childhood hero in that way, as a father to his best friend. It even made All Might sort of Shouto´s uncle, in a way.

Shaking the ramble of thoughts from his head he kept walking. Uraraka´s room had been placed directly opposite from Toga's; for safety reasons, he thought.

Shouto rapped his knuckles on the door “Uraraka, we´re all seeing Izuku in a while, you should join us.”

There was no answer, so he waited a couple of minutes. “Uraraka. Seriously.” Again, she didn’t answer.

“I´m walking in there, so you better be ready.” He didn’t want to barge into anyone´s privacy like that, but Uraraka needed to face this situation, to deal with it.

Turning the doorknob, Shouto entered the room, which was dark and stuffy, and smelled of discarded food. Uraraka sat on her bed, staring into the distance.

“What did I do wrong, Todoroki? Did I push Deku into that whore´s arms? Why did I fuck up so badly? I loved him, I loved him all along…What happened?”

Shouto didn’t know how to respond to that. He had suspected Izuku and Uraraka had shared feelings for each other, but by the second year he had stopped noticing any signals. And frankly, he hadn’t wanted to bother Izuku with questions on that, he was much more of a people person and probably understood whatever had happened.

But maybe he hadn’t, and something had indeed happened. Shouto said softly “Uraraka, why don’t you ask Izuku that yourself?”

“I…I don’t think I can face him, not like this.”

“You can shower and change, there is still time”

“That is not what I meant."

“I know, maybe you would prefer to speak with him alone, afterwards? I can ask him.”

“That would probably be even worse…just give me five minutes, I´ll join you guys.”

Chapter End Notes

Quite a bit of drama on the next one, see you soon! Thanks for reading!

Tenya´s feels

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Tenya Iida had not slept peacefully on his nap.

A few minutes after falling asleep, he had started dreaming vividly. He was back again in that alley in Hosu, having found the Hero Killer Stain, the blood of the hero Native still fresh on his blade. As he had before, he fought the Hero Killer with no success and fell to his chipped, unkempt katana.

Stain watched over him, speaking about how Tenya had failed at being a true hero. Tenya knew he had made progress, he was becoming a real hero, a hero like his brother, a hero like Izuku.

And as he thought his name, Deku appeared, the lighting of Full Cowl illuminating the alley. And so did Todoroki, with fire and Ice.

But Tenya didn't see them attack Stain, didn't see what had happened that day. No, he saw something different, something wrong.

Izuku and Shouto walked over to him and held him up, and their eyes were red. They held him in place. He was still paralyzed, he couldn't even speak, he couldn't even shout. Stain walked over, his eyes full of hatred. Full of death.

Izuku leaned in to whisper into his ear, and his voice was…wrong "You know he was always right about you, Tenya. You have always been a fake hero, and fake heroes don't deserve to live." Stain swung his sword, and Tenya felt a cold pain in his neck.

He wasn't supposed to feel pain in dreams, was he? He felt the pull of gravity and fell. As he fell, he started to spin, and he could see behind him. A suit of white armour was falling down, limp. His thoughts were sluggish, he could barely hold onto them, but he managed to think *that was my body.*

Tenya woke up in a cold sweat, on the floor. At first, he couldn't breathe, he couldn't see. He was panicking. But a second later someone was by his side "Tenya! Its alright! You´re fine!"

The brown-haired person placed his glasses on his nose, careful not to smudge the lenses with fingerprints or grease. When Tenya saw it was Ochako, everything was alright. His breathing became easy and regular, and he felt the nightmare slip away.

He got back up and sat down again. "What was it, Tenya-chan?" asked Tsuyu, with her usual monotone.

"Just a nightmare, Tsu-chan, I dreamt of Stain again. It must be those Swedish MRE´s they gave us, they were probably too heavy for my stomach!" he joked, trying to take importance away from it. The dream worried him, he should call Tensei and discuss it later. "How much did I sleep, anyway?"

"Twenty-three minutes" answered Tsuyu. The dream was more suspicious by the minute.

At least Ochako looked better, even if all he could see on her face was worry.

Tenya had been struggling for quite some time now with how he felt towards Ochako.

For two years she had pushed away Izuku discreetly, and now he knew that it was because she had not known how to handle her feelings for Izuku. Tenya had not known that, and had tried to keep normality in their group of friends, always pushing to keep everyone happy and to make everyone fill like they belonged.

As time passed, he and Ochako stayed close, and he started to notice a lot of things. He liked the way her hair moved in the breeze, the way a dimple formed in her right cheek when she smiled.

He liked the way she walked, the way she fought. He started to take an interest in her family, her interests outside the common ground they shared as friends. And at one point, he almost felt ashamed of wanting to be with her alone, instead of keeping the friendship between Ochako, Izuku and himself.

He loved the friendship, but he started wanting more.

When Graduation Day arrived, he had gathered every ounce of his courage to ask Ochako out to the party. He was ready to accept he might have feelings for his friend.

Romantic feelings.

And then Ochako surprised him and asked him first. He was ecstatic, and the first thing he had done after that had been to call Tensei, just telling him that he was happy with life.

But afterwards he had thought a bit less on what Ochako had asked, and more on how she had asked. She had looked…relieved? Was that because he had said yes, or because she had been more scared of asking someone else, and was relieved she hadn't needed to face that situation?

His doubts all but died at the party. Ochako looked beautiful in a pink dress and the way she had smiled when seeing him had pretty much set his feelings straight. He liked Ochako.

Izuku and Hatsume had gone together, both had said "Just as friends!" just enough times for Tenya to start to doubt it. He honestly liked the idea of the two as a couple; his hero side appreciated how well Izuku and Mei were an unstoppable source of ideas and innovation, and the current versions of all their hero suits were born of that; and his human side could just see how easily they spent time together and could imagine the same being true in a relationship, and even if the inventor girl annoyed him to no end with her lack of regard for personal hygiene and safety regulations, he did see it made her happy to spend time with Izuku.

His friend and the mechanist had given Tenya and Ochako a lot of space that night. Ochako had always had a bit of disdain for Hatsume and had never been too keen to start a friendship with her and would only grudgingly allow the engineer to work on her suit or support items.

Tenya had thought perhaps it was some sort of lingering resentment, like his own for the girl for a while after the Sports Festival. In the end he had acknowledged that Hatsume wasn't a bad person just for adding humiliation to the emotional rollercoaster that was the day of Tensei´s attack.

He thought maybe Ochako had a similar grudge and had never poked too much around the subject, even when Ochako cast annoyed glances at Hatsume as she worked with Izuku on projects or "Babies".

The graduation party had been Tenya´s best night in a very long time. The music, the dancing, the excitement for the future…and all of it alongside Ochako. At one point he realized that what he was feeling wasn't only that happiness, but also a certain lack of control.

The dancing had made him and Ochako quite thirsty, and they had drunk from the punch Monoma had brought. A few minutes later, he felt his balance growing worse, his speech getting slurred, his head moving just to keep staring at anything. And Ochako...she had started acting very weird, out of character, uninhibited.

Tenya then knew they were drunk, and before Ochako could drink more, he decided they should go home.

Ochako followed as he led her by the hand, muttering something about "-at east ain´t that…lissa. Up hers!" Ochako had then taken her hand away and, with both hands, given the finger to everyone passing. Bakugou and Kirishima were leaving as well by then, and Bakugou flipped them the bird in return with a bright smile on his face.

"Fuck off, Bakugou!"

"You´re alright, round face! If we weren't both taken, we should have gotten together!" He was even drunker than them!

"Deku and I are just friends, shithead!" answered Ochako, to which Kirishima, clearly the soberest one of the two, cringed visibly, saying "Ouch!"

"I obviously meant the dude taking you fucking home, round face! I can't even tell who he is. Kiri, who the fuck is that?"

"It´s Iida, Katsuki"

"Holy fuck." Bakugou took a couple of steps backwards, then swaggered back like a pirate with new sea legs "Leeda. You gotta be a Ron Weasley here, so man the fuck up and kiss the girl. Kiri, hold on, we´re flying away to Paris."

"Paris, Katsuki?"

"I´m fucking drunk, don't ask me to remember romantic places, now grab the fuck on."

"Let's just take a cab, Katsuki, let's go home."

"You´re no fun, Kiri, but fuck it, as long as they can drive us for some fucking food along the way. Bye you damn nerds!"

Their fellow heroes had taken one of the cabs. "Tenya, what is a Ron Weasley? Is it a sexual thing?"

"I have no idea, Ochako. Let´s just go home." The taxi made them extremely dizzy, and they held onto each other for dear life.

"This is even worse than overusing my Quirk, Tenya" had said Ochako as they took a corner in the road. Miraculously, they had made it back in one piece back to their team headquarters. There were rooms to stay and food to eat in the morning, and it was quite near to the party´s venue.

After fumbling with the keys for what felt like an hour, Tenya had managed to let them in. "I still have celebration champagne on the fridge, wanna drink it?" had asked Ochako.

The alcohol already in his blood didn't want to deny anything to her, and he agreed. Ochako poured the sparkling liquor on red cups, and they drank, talked and laughed. Tenya hadn't noticed when Ochako had sat next to him on the couch, or how close they had gotten.

He *wanted* this.

He felt ready. He leaned in and kissed Ochako. His first kiss wasn't perfect, but it wasn't alone, followed by a few more. But it had been too much alcohol in the end, and he had to separate.

"The champagne was too much, I…have to go to the bathroom!" He had puked an almost clear, ethylic vomit that sickened him, made him ashamed. He had drunk THAT much?

It had made him much clearer headed as well, and he thought, to his dismay, that he wouldn't be kissing Ochako tonight after that. He found her asleep, snoring softly, and carried her to her bedroom. Tenya had enough presence of mind to place her in a safe position and to move her trashcan near, in case she needed it.

In the end, he had felt it would have been creepy to stay the night in the room, and had retreated to his own, falling asleep immediately.

The days after had been very awkward. Ochako and him were even closer, but not to the point of intimacy. Tenya felt they should talk about it, maybe even start a relationship. He wanted it a lot.

Then Izuku left for America, and everything got slightly better. They actually went in a few dates, but after each Ochako looked even more confused. When Tenya asked her about her feelings after the fourth date, she replied saying that she was feeling conflicted and distracted, and that maybe they should try again when both felt more confident, or it would affect their performance as heroes. Tenya had thought that was logical and had agreed.

Afterwards it seemed the work hadn't stopped, with villains, investigations and disasters every day. And then Izuku was revealed to be working with Himiko Toga, and a few hours later that he had been captured by villains, and Ochako had taken it very badly. Tenya hadn't understood why the anger she had for the villain girl was so fiery, so personal.

Until they rescued their friend, and the pieces of the puzzle clicked.

After the battle Ochako had been withdrawn, catatonic, she barely even blinked. She followed them to the tents the Americans had placed and then had looked up and seen Toga.

In an instant the fight had returned to her eyes and it was all Tenya could do to stop her. He took her aside, behind a stack of equipment crates, and told her "Ochako, you have to tell me everything. You are not being yourself, and it scares me. I care for you so, so much and I can´t bear to see you like this. Please, just talk to me."

Her shoulders had started shaking, and she sat down before starting to cry. "I fucked everything up, Tenya. I loved him, I loved Deku, and I fucked it all up. Why didn't I just do the right thing? I pushed him into that whore´s arms! Little vampire slut…what does she have that I don't? She´s a fucking murderer!"

And then she had looked into her own hands, panicking "Those people in the base…oh God. I think I killed them. I…I didn't even think about it. I was so angry all I saw was red…Oh no, oh no!".

He had taken her face in his hands and gently turned her towards him. "Ochako, it´s alright. They didn't die, and I would never think you are a monster. Izuku wouldn't think you are a monster."

It hurt to say his friend´s name, after Ochako had revealed her feelings had been for him. But Tenya cared too much for her to let the pain show. He had to be strong for her now.

“You´ll be alright. I´m here for you, our friends are here for you. And…I think I know how you feel, all this anger, all your feelings perverted into vengeance. I felt the same for Stain, I wanted his head squished under my boot, to hear him asking for mercy. And that made me reckless. Look at your broken hand, look at my arm.”

He slid back his sleeve, the scars of several surgeries very visible, fine control over his left hand much diminished, even after the physiotherapy. “This is where vengeance took us, but Izuku, Shouto, you…you all brought me back. I found my place again. Please, Ochako, let us help you. We need you. I need you.”

It hadn’t been the last time she had cried after the mission, self-doubt creeping in on her every time she tried to sleep or distract herself. They probably had the same argument three or four times, but Tenya felt she was slowly getting better. Eating a few hamburgers from a local American-style diner had helped her get much more peace of mind.

She had even managed to fall asleep, and Tenya had left to join the others.

And now, she looked almost back to normal. Tenya wasn’t particularly eager to see Ochako talk with Izuku, the feelings exposed there…he knew it would hurt.

It would hurt Ochako, it would hurt Izuku, it would hurt him. Maybe that pain was necessary, but it was no more welcome for its need.

Agent Anna Dobinek was NOT fond of hospitals. They reminded her of her grandmother´s deathbed, of grandpa´s endless grief at paying bills for a doctor that couldn’t heal his wife.

It reminded her of getting lost as a little kid, looking for the cafeteria, and stumbling unto a bloody leg surgery. The amputation had stayed on her mind, the trauma forever steering her away from a career in medicine, and her prayers to whatever god would listen for not getting injured like that. In the end, she had probably seen worse as a soldier and secret agent, but that leg…that leg had always remained.

“Anna, you look pale, is everything alright?” Freya asked her, her face full of concern. The Shieldmaiden Hero looked much less imposing in civilian clothes, and pretty much no one had recognized her in Japan. Dressed in yoga pants and a hoodie with a smiling fish, the most imposing thing about her was her hair, the complex braids held together with iron hair rings.

“All good, hospitals creep me out, just that.”

“If you need to talk, I am here, friend” answered the hero.

“Thanks, Freya. You´re cool. Maybe after the meeting, if you still have more of that vodka. It got me all chatty last time.”

“Indeed, I have another bottle in the suit bag! I enjoyed the vodka talk quite a lot!” The vodka talk had been very stimulating indeed, and the Norwegian hero was surprisingly easy to talk to. Anna already felt closer to her than many fellow soldiers she had known for years.

Sadly, before they could start a new game of “never have I ever” they had arrived in Japan. Anna had silently cursed the comfortable speed of Hatsume´s plane; she was just about to suggest a game of spin the bottle.

Back in the present, they finally got to the conference room on the hospital´s top floor. Texas Red was already at the door. “Good, y'all are here. You´ve got executive power from the Nordics, right?”

“Aye, power was conferred to Freya Gunarrssdotirr by the prime minister and Secrets Minister.”

“Excellent, let´s hustle then.” He pushed the door open and walked inside, instantly commanding the attention of the Japanese representatives inside.

In the Japanese side of the table sat All Might, an Inspector Gadget looking dude who introduced himself as Tsukauchi and a representative of the Hero Public Safety Commission and Japanese Intelligence, a rather non-descript lady in a pant suit, who didn’t give out a name.

On the side of the table sat Midoriya and Toga, speaking in quiet voices, being very close to each other. By God, she was really thinking they made a cute couple.

“So, you represent Japan? Good. Our government is taking full responsibility for all of this operation, with all its details. All the paperwork for Miss Toga was already approved on both sides and now she is our prisoner, to do with as we deem appropriate. As the authority over her sentence, I will call this a “flexible house arrest”, and when the terms of our agreement with her are met, negotiation over her further sentence will happen entirely with US authorities.”

The Hero Commission woman spoke up “Mr. Johns, strong-arming the Japanese government to use a criminal according to our laws as your assassin is hardly what we would call an agreement.”

Anna decided she didn’t like this woman. “It´s Deputy Director Johns for you, ma´am, and the paperwork is behind me. And it leads me to the second thing, a team of your Heroes getting mixed in our operation after getting called by a non-existent Spetsnaz force. They may have screwed up our plan immensely, but they got my assets out and got me just enough intel for our operation. So, I ´m calling in favours again and my mountain of papers; these kids are not getting any fallout for this. Am I understood?”

Tsukauchi answered to that “We can be flexible on that; as licensed heroes they can work in contest with international partners. But Miss Toga´s involvement has been leaked to the public, and the Japanese government has no good answers to that. On the Police´s side, a statement by Midoriya could be a good thing, and we can have the press ready. We advise against revealing Toga outright and keeping all of this as quiet as possible.”

“Got it. Now, I guess you have not been briefed on our operation? Agent Dobinek, if you would.”

Anna took the spotlight “We are hunting down Pestilentia. Midoriya is on board, as Toga´s handler. We are taking him dead or alive, and we are pretty close now. The Nordic Confederation aided us in the Denmark situation, and sent their number one Hero, Freya.”

She pointed at her friend “Hello!” and continued “we´re making it all public when we are successful.”

“Very concise. Thank you, agent. Now we will answer any questions not restricted by OPSEC. We have, lets see…twenty minutes for that. All Might and Midoriya have had a draining day, after all.”

Chapter End Notes

The big talk is in the next chapter, see you there! Thanks for reading and commenting!

End of apologies

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Mei Hatsume checked her notebook again, filled to the brim with notes, diagrams and half-thought ideas. On a normal day she would always be either focused on the task at hand, completely in the moment, or full of thoughts and inspiration for new projects.

This dichotomy had ultimately led her to become a very messy, disorganized person for everything except that which was essential for the project at hand, resulting in disorganized notebooks, bedroom, workshop and lab. If Izuku hadn't made her clean up every once in a while, she might have even slept among machinery sometimes.

But there she was rambling again in her thoughts about how lost she could get in them sometimes. And she kind of wished to just get lost, to let her overactive mind take her away, give her new ideas, instead of facing her feelings.

And goddamn did her thoughts go back to that. She was shaken up, nervous and anxious. But was it the fact that she had gone through a warzone, fighting mercenaries without even an actual gun or wearing armour? Or that she realized she had feelings for Izuku, beyond what one would feel for their best friend?

Mei didn't think it was possibly the second option. It had to be the traumatic stress of a battle she had never prepared for.

She was an engineer, an inventor for cry out loud! Not a hero. She never trained for that, she barely had combat lessons (Izuku had insisted and taught her himself, in hindsight now she probably knew why she had enjoyed those lessons so much…). And she had sacrificed almost thirty Babies, obviously she had to be a bit shook!

Though the Babies had performed most admirably, and she thought they might sell very well someday. The implosion missiles hadn't even broken any laws of physics!

Maybe she had been very scared with the broken ribs and all the cuts? The painkillers had pretty much kept her from anything too agonizing, and her scars being super scratchy was just very annoying. Still, Recovery Girl was a scary old witch whenever she healed her, so she would not scratch her back.

Nope, her injuries weren't too problematic,;her dad had been very relieved that she had made it out with so little consequence. Her dad hadn't understood why she had personally joined the assault. It confused Mei, knowing everything she did of her father's story.

As a hero, Mei´s dad had been in the frontlines as well. Blacksmith, the Battle Engineer, had never been a particularly well known or powerful hero, his command of ferrous metals just strong enough to pass the Ketsubutsu Academy entrance exam, and his main power being his expertise on vehicles and support items.

He had been a working-class hero, close to his community and fierce in their defence, a team player above all. The newspapers may not have acknowledged Blacksmith, but some heroes had.

Five years before Mei had been born, Blacksmith had been recruited by Endeavor for an operation against the North Korean Remnant, the extremist holdouts who had rejected the unification of

North and South fifty years prior.

The Remnant still held a city, only designated as Alpha-2, surrounded by four military bases and hundreds of greenhouses, for feeding the population. A de-militarized zone a mile wide surrounded the Remnant, a Unified Korean army holding it on siege, an international fleet blockading the Remnant´s coast. The only thing holding back an invasion was an old Soviet Tsar Bomb, which would annihilate both sides and kill thousands of people.

A Japanese Intelligence informant had reported a sneak attack where the Remnant would punch a hole through the fleet, land on Japan and nuke Tokyo. Three teams had been sent along with the Japanese Navy´s aircraft carrier; All Might´s, Endeavor´s, and Gang Orca´s.

No additional ships or heroes would be able to make it in time, the situation was critical. Every man involved would rather die than fail, no nuclear bomb would be detonated on Japan on their watch.

Musashi Hatsume was doing his patriotic duty, fighting for justice, and meeting his own heroes, like All Might and Endeavor. Endeavor had been an arrogant, power-obsessed bastard, and Blacksmith had hated him with a passion since they met; his humble, down to earth, curious and good-natured personality clashing immediately with the Fire hero´s. Despite that, he was a masterful tactician and a clear-headed team leader, and in battle he was reliable and brave.

Just as informed, the Remnant had attacked. Their technology had used inventive ways to torpedo the blockade fleet, and a supervillain on their side, Jian the Pale Sword, had actually cut the command ship in two. Fast boats had crossed the hole, a bomb on each, and the heroes had split up to catch them all.

All Might had left his team to be commanded by Sir Nighteye and gone to engage Jian, a cyborg ninja of extreme power, and the 15th most wanted villain at the time, and the Remnant´s fleet, which had sallied out to exploit the weakness in the allied squad.

Endeavor had sent three zodiac fast boats, each with two heroes and a few Korean SEALs on board, each one heading for the enemy watercraft. Blacksmith had led his team, accompanied by the trainee hero Selkie, fighting for justice on his provisional license, going far left.

With Blacksmith´s Quirk they had managed to sabotage the enemy bowrider boat and approach to board it, but before they got any closer, an anti-vehicle missile had been fired at them. A concussive missile, coated in a thermo-active plastic, so all Blacksmith could do was take the hit for his people. He saved Selkie, and prevented five families from losing a father, five women from becoming widows.

Mushashi Hatsume had saved his team, but lost his right leg halfway in the thigh, sustained second degree burns on his back and both arms, and had half his left pinkie finger blown up.

The operation had been successful, and Japan had been saved. Blacksmith had been thanked for his services, given a medal, and paid bills at the hospital, but little else. He had to wrangle physiotherapy for the injury with taking over the “Famous Hatsume Workshop” from his aunt, the retired F1 driver “Coppers” Hatsume.

Blacksmith was focused and tireless, applying all his will to the physical therapy. The instant he had received his prosthetic leg he had started tweaking with it, sometimes to the annoyance of the therapists and doctors. When trying the Walking Leg Mk. IV, a semi-powered “auto-mail” leg, Hatsume had accidentally ran into a pink haired surgeon, called Motoko.

Instead of accepting the hundreds of apologies the ex-hero said, Motoko had just stared at his prosthetic with her cross-haired eyes. She had called it a “Baby” and had started talking, a hundred miles a minute. Musashi had made a great friend that day, and by the end of the month they were dating.

A spinal surgeon and a hero-turned-engineer married soon after, and from them was born the currently stressed genius, Mei Hatsume! Mom would see her tomorrow; her job took her all over the country when especially difficult surgeries were necessary.

Her Quirk, like Mei´s, was Zoom, which combined with a steady hand had made her one of the foremost surgeons in her area. At the moment she had gone to an expo showcasing new technology and techniques for surgery, especially interested in some new tools that could help fix up the injuries of numerous cases Motoko had overseen, among them Tensei Iida.

Mei hadn’t given much thought to not seeing her mother in what? Almost two months? She would have to commandeer the *Mei* sometimes for personal visits; she didn’t want to lose contact with her beloved parents.

The inventor girl heard footsteps coming. She hadn’t used the time to think her questions, to think about how to talk to Izuku. There was a knock on the door, and he was there.

What was she going to do? Would she be jealous like Uraraka? No, it wasn’t like she liked him or anything…And she didn’t think she could ever get that murderous about anything. Would she be angry? Would she just be happy? Izuku was at the door and she didn’t know what she would do.

“Come in, Izuku, its unlocked!”

He smiled softly at her, taking a seat on the bed beside her “Hey, Mei. Before we say anything, can I say thank you?”

“Huh?” Mei had no idea what he meant.

“You risked your life to save me, you didn’t have to, but everyone told me how far you went for me. I don’t know what I did to deserve friends like you and the others, but I'm thankful. You saved my life. And that adrenalin shot you gave me pulled me away from a Quirk dream, letting me fight.”

Mei felt a bit flustered at being thanked so earnestly and she couldn’t articulate much of a response “Eh…huh, yah?”

She blinked and took a deep breath, focusing after a couple of seconds “We were never going to leave you there, Izuku! You are our friend, you are my best friend, of course I would go and save you! And I also had an opportunity to test more than thirty Babies!”

She tried to bring any conversation to technical improvements, or heroes or pretty much anything they talked easily about, not to start talking about any feelings. “But Mei…I know you, something is bothering you. Was it the fight? Your injuries? Or something else?”

“I…I don’t know Izuku. Maybe? I feel really distracted, all I´m thinking is that I don’t know what is going on, I guess. How am I supposed to feel about all of this? I…don’t even understand these notes I made. This doodle for a hover-boot was so bad that I stopped halfway. My back is all itchy, I feel like a little girl that wants her mommy, and I don’t even know how to feel about…about you?”

Mei closed her eyes. “I trust you completely Izuku. You are very important to me. Apart from my

family, I don't care so much for anyone else. But…you don't trust me, do you? Toga…all that was going for a full year and you didn't tell me anything."

Tears started flowing…Mei didn't remember the last time she had cried. "We are best friends, Izuku! We are not supposed to keep secrets from each other, and suddenly you have a villain-prisoner-government-agent girlfriend out of nowhere? It hurts, you know? And its not because I like you or anything…I mean I do you like you but I don´t know if like that or if I´m just confused because I don't know how to say what I feel, cause I never felt like this…But really I think I´m just angry at you!"

Mei huffed and looked away.

"I…it was technically a crime, Mei. I never should have kept you in the dark. I´m really sorry." He got closer. Mei normally didn't think about personal space or physical contact, but she suddenly was very conscious of how close he was.

And then he hugged her. Why did it feel so right? This was unfair. She said softly "I…I´m not really that angry at you, Izuku."

She wasn't about to leave the embrace anytime soon. She really was feeling "feelings", huh? What horrible timing. At least she would have him as her best friend.

"I just want you to trust me as much as I trust you, okay? Please, Izuku"

"I´m not breaking your trust again, Mei."

That was probably good enough, for now. She was a big girl, she could get over having a crush on her best friend. And she didn't know the first thing of being a girlfriend anyway. Having her best friend was much better than risking a relationship when she knew nothing about them and could ruin all.

The Shieldmaiden Hero, Freya, didn't consider her potential as a hero to be underused while serving as a guard in a hospital. Everyone deserved some rest, even more if their next move was going to be as big as she thought.

She strolled lazily on the hallways, her power present, menacing to her enemies, comforting to her allies. She moved like a lioness at rest, a certain spring on her step telling anyone careful enough to see that she could wreck their shit at a moment's notice.

Though perhaps she didn't look particularly menacing at the moment, dressed like she was returning from a workout or just lounging at home. In armour, though, she commanded fear and respect in the battlefield.

The hospital wasn't too big. Perhaps fifteen rooms in each floor, with three operating theatres, the conference room doctors used, which the brown haired (previously very angry) girl had used to talk with the green haired boy, and two waiting rooms, one which the rest of the teens were using, and the other, for guard duty. A square corridor connected everything, with access for elevators on the central side and the stairs on the external side. Sound civil engineering, if a bit boring, architecturally.

As the daughter of a pair of historians, young Freya had learned quite a bit about architecture,

trade, anthropology, warfare and even about farming through her parents´ studies. A few may have considered them strange for the detail they put into every bit of research about the so-called Viking Era; they considered their approach “holistic”.

It had made for a magical childhood, and had made her hero theme completely obvious. Though her father had been irate when she had decided to add wings to her helmet, “They didn’t have horns, wings or anything, are you Asterix or something?” They still laughed about it when they met.

If she had designed the building, she would have probably made the shape round and organic, resembling the trunk of a tree. Smooth dark stone on the outside, with panels of light to give off a futuristic mood. No visible windows, just the surface. And the inside…wood panels and lighter stone, state of the art furniture, a fireplace…well that was just the house she was planning to build in Iceland, not a hospital!

Maybe Agent Anna could discuss architecture with her, she was smart and cultured after all. Maybe not in a “can play classical music on a piano and recite poetry in Latin” type of cultured but in the “I know weird stuff about the Roman Empire and trivia from your favourite movies, and I know the best street food in every city” type of cultured.

The green haired boy coming out of the genius girl´s room surprised her a bit, taking her out of her musings on making the hospital a nicer building.

The unintentional heartthrob in his group, the kid´s eyes lit up with enthusiasm when he saw her. Was he looking for her or something? “Oh my God, it´s really you! Number one hero of the Nordic Confederation Freya! The Shieldmaiden!”

“Yes, I am! How did you know? I have no armour and you did not see me in the rescue!” His enthusiasm made her smile, she could tell he was a good boy.

“I´m a really big fan of heroes since I was little! I keep up with the news on heroes and I write about their Quirks and abilities. It is always a big honour to meet heroes so strong and brave! When you fought the Mad Elf those years ago, I was very impressed!” That fight hadn’t been too public, the green lad had to be very interested indeed.

“You are a great hero too, Dekoo! I saw the fight against fish sauce head man and I liked!”

“Oh, you mean the Nomu? I felt a bit bad for being so ruthless, but I had to protect my friends. Uhhh…could I have your autograph?” He had suddenly produced a notebook and a pen from somewhere.

“Of course, of course!” She signed it in English; “For the great hero Dekoo, from the great hero Freya Gunarrssdottirr” and a doodle of a fish smiling with an immaculate human denture. “We talk later, you should go to bed. It is late.” The boy agreed and said goodbye, leaving for his room.

Agent Anna would probably be relieved that, with the Dekoo boy finally in bed, they had no expected movement for the night, and could wait for the next shift in the waiting room. She waved as she opened the door and crossed in. “Hello, all the barn are in the beds. Kiddies I mean.” Sometimes a word or two slipped in from her native Norwegian. “Any news?”

“That Inspector Gadget looking guy had some new info; Midoriya´s story on Toga checks out, at least the Ako part. If so, she was 18 all the time we had her in custody...one bit of leverage less, I guess. They are sending over some guys tomorrow for a blood sample, maybe they can match it with the one on the record. And I have even better news, just for you.”

“What would that be, Anna?”

“Remember that you told me you had never had Chicago Pizza? Or New York Pizza? Turns out there´s a place for each in town, and they deliver. Up for a bit of a competition?”

“Hoh! Anytime! What is the competition?”

“We´ll bet which one gets here first, if we call them at the same time!”

“Deal!”

“You didn’t even ask what we were betting?”

“We are betting something?”

“How about the loser has to tell a secret?” “I like it! Let´s call!”

Thankfully, the pizza places had an app, because her Japanese was non-existent, and Anna´s was somehow worse. “How did you survive with two teenagers speaking Japanese all the time?” Freya asked.

“I kinda assumed it was all probably dirty talk between them, I tuned out. Though I can tell now that "daisuki" and "aishteru" are Toga's favorite phrases, I guess. So, New York or Chicago?”

“Hmmm…Chicago!” A lucky choice, in the end. Between bites, Freya said “This is so good! But we´ll need to exercise these many calories?”

“Oh, I´ve got a few workouts we can try tomorrow…” Was that a wink? Two could play that game!

Freya scooted over in the couch, till they were almost touching. Freya spoke, her voice just above a whisper, looking directly into her eyes, holding the young woman´s gaze, transfixed.

“You owe me a secret, Anna.”

She licked her lips and replied “I´ll whisper it in your ear, it´s a secret after all.”

Freya felt Anna´s warm breath tickling her neck and ear and then she heard, in a sultry, seductive voice, “You have tomato sauce all over your cheek!” They both burst out laughing, while Anna grabbed a breadstick, and used it to wipe the offending tomato sauce from her cheek.

“As attractive as eating cheek-tomato is, you owe me the secret!”

“Whisper it in your other ear? This time for real?”

“Okay, okay.”

She was really close, almost kissing her ear when she said, “I like you.”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading, this one was a bit hard to write. As always I appreciate comments and kudos greatly.

Not quite finished

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Nazzaro, you will have time and money enough for a new body if you so wish when we finish the operation."

Pestilentia´s voice came from behind the heavy oak desk, but Nazzaro didn't reply immediately. His handsome, arrogant and noble face had been smashed by one of the heroes he had called as part of his boss´ plan to destabilize the kid Midoriya´s friends.

Pestilentia had proved to be unreliable in his predictions for once; assuming that at best the Japanese would arrive in three hours, plenty of time to deal with a single American and whatever puny reinforcements they could scramble.

They had the surviving Mountain Brigade commandos, over fifty Nomus, one of them a veritable giant, scores of armed mercenaries, and a state-of-the-art bipedal tank, courtesy of Pestilentia´s pals in the Russian government…more than enough to deal with four people.

Midoriya´s friends had turned out to be absolute maniacs, breaking the sound barrier with reckless abandon and getting to the base at roughly the same time as the Nordics.

And Pestilentia´s files had not included any heroes who could jet around and rocket punch innocent, handsome men. His nose was broken in three different places and was bent way out of its former shape; his cheekbones had fractured around the attack; his upper lip was completely swollen and cut; the back of his head was a giant bruise after smacking his head on the floor.

"I could have been a model, boss!" he whined, pathetically. The fight against the bipedal tank and the Nomus had given him a chance to slither away to safety, dragging himself to the tunnel connecting the base with an airfield twenty miles away, using the quiet cable car to traverse the tunnel, and the helicopter on the other side. The only man to leave the base with his freedom.

"You and I know you were a killer before you could have had much of a career as anything else, lad. What else troubles you, apart from having become ugly as an orc?"

"They got the jump on us, boss. Everything was going according to what you had said, everything, and then it was all gone to shit, boss."

"This is why we mitigate, Nazzaro. It is a loss, indeed, no mere setback. I´m sending you to South America next, the big picture remains. We will still change the world. The Colombians already know you are coming."

"What about Europe, boss? We´ve lost Britain and Scandinavia in a very short time."

"Changes will be made to take that into account, but the Pestilence will occur. My child, "Toga"... she might even help when we meet. I have sleeves full of aces, Nazzaro. As for the heroes… Midoriya is a joy to play with, and that one we caught with the spray turret…Tenya Iida, is a mass of fears and trauma that I will enjoy breaking. Alas, that I did not think to target them all. It brings me back to my origins. Worry not, my underling, I won´t risk the operation in any way with this… hobby…of mine."

The boss´ red eyes had a glint of pure evil that Nazzaro couldn't hold. So, even with the Americans

and everyone else this close, Pestilentia still would keep the operation going. The Pestilence, it was called.

“I did not name myself as one of the Four Horsemen because I can control dreams. No, I will bring Pestilence to the waking world, and soon the other three Horsemen shall follow” had said the boss, addressing every man and woman high ranking enough to merit personal contact. Were the three horsemen allies? Were All for One and Ndege Mweusi two of them? Were they literally famine, war and death?

Pestilentia had explained his vision, and from the Pestilence, a new world would be born.

Shinsou´s tired eyes looked up and down at Izuku and Toga. “Is this one of Ms. Joke´s lame stories, Midoriya?”

Izuku opened his mouth to reply, but Toga was faster “Nope, purple friend, 100% real.”

“Yeah, that.” Shinsou smirked in slight amusement “I´m glad you found someone as crazy as you, Izuku. Anyway, what can I help you two with?”

Izuku replied “Tenya is coming too, I´m really surprised he´s late…”

Toga looked at Izuku with a knowing, mischievous smile “Ochako is probably keeping him busy.” She giggled.

Shinsou blinked a few times and asked, “How would you even know that?”

Toga´s eyes shone brightly “I can sniff out when a person is in love! Iida stinks of it when he thinks about Ochako!” It had taken two days for Shinsou to meet them, as he was working on an assignment for the Japanese government, and in that time the heroes and Toga had been given rooms on an Air Force base, at least until everyone was cleared medically and Texas Red found an assignment for the rest of the team.

“So, some sort of pheromone, huh?”

“I guess. Either that or something in the blood” she smiled, showing her fangs.

Shinsou didn’t react, so Toga continued “Speaking of smells…you smell in love, Shinsou-kun! Who is the lucky person? A gentleman? A lady?” That had caused a reaction, making the purple-headed hero blush all over.

“A hand here, Izuku? I´d prefer to talk business first before your girlfriend sniffs out my whole personal life…”

Toga smiled to herself. *It is so great to be treated like an awkward friend instead of an enemy! And who may the lover be? I wanna find out, Izu-Izu!* “Of course, Hitoshi. Maybe when Tenya joins he can give more insight, but Himiko and I have had more of these dreams anyway, so we might as well start.”

Izuku told everything he knew from the supervillain´s own explanation, his conjectures and assumptions, and the experience from the dreams. Toga added what information she could, particularly on the subject of the subconscious manipulation and how it made the commands they

had brainwashed in appear as her own thoughts at first.

By now, Toga could clearly discern the slight differences in her own thoughts and the villains influence, but not always tune them out. *Kill that one, take his purple hair for your own. Shut up, asshole villain, get the fuck off my brain.*

Iida had arrived as she described one of the most recurring of dreams, where she toured a school, they now knew was the Tselinoyarsk Institute, was tied up to a chair and subjected to traditional brainwashing.

“Oh hey, Ingenium pal” she greeted the serious lad, who politely gave a nod of acknowledgement. So far, he had been more concerned with Toga´s effect on Uraraka than whatever he may feel for her past as a villain, and was courteous, if not especially friendly.

“Would you like to tell your dream next, Tenya? We are giving Shinsou everything we have on Pestilentia´s Quirk to see what might be done.” Izuku offered.

Iida had agreed, and told of how Stain had beheaded him, as Izuku and Shouto held him in place. *My Izu-Izu is too pure for that, that was too obviously a dream.*

“And last night, there was another one. I´m sorry if I may seem distant today…it really shook me, and you were both there.” He had looked at Izuku and Toga in shame, and then averted his gaze.

“It started at UA, we were all there, you, Ochako, me…even Mineta. I began to read some announcements as class president, I think something about lunch I had to say on second year. As I finished and started walking to my seat, the wall exploded as a Nomu crashed through it. In a second all the members of the League of Villains were inside. The Nomu had tackled Aizawa-sensei to the ground, just like at the USJ when I arrived with the Pro Heroes, and Shigaraki had not wasted a moment to get beside our teacher, ready to dissolve him.

“All for One was just steps behind, and in an instant, he had grown some sort of…tentacles from his back and had attacked Todoroki and Momo, who were already running ahead to fight. The tentacles pierced them through the spine…the screaming was horrible. I was frozen in fear. He took their Quirks, the tentacles pulsing as they sent their powers to their thief. It had taken a few seconds, and then everyone was frozen solid, with chains wrapped on top, made with Yaoyorozu´s stolen Quirk.

“All of us were frozen, save Aizawa. Shigaraki started with his face this time, grabbing it with both hands. Sensei tried to hold on, to be brave for us…but it wasn’t enough. He cried while he still had tear ducts, while he still had eyes. He yelled in agony as his face melted off and his brain started to go. Shigaraki removed his hands from a corpse, half his head turned to dust, his jaw open in a silent scream.

“All for One had made us all watch, and, after our teacher was dead, he made us all move around in our blocks of ice. He arranged us in a circle, so we could see everyone around. He spoke, and if I hadn’t already been frozen by fear and ice, I would have been stopped dead in my tracks. “All of you must die, but the methods of your execution…that will be fun, poetic.” Even more villains entered the classroom, some from minor gangs, even a few from the Eight Precepts of Death.”

His voice grew even more afraid, sadder, almost in grief.

“They…they started with you, Izuku. It was you, Toga, you stepped up, knife in hand, and kissed Izuku. Then you slashed open his throat. And you smiled after that. We all yelled, in anger, in grief, in fear. All for One gagged us with some other Quirk, I couldn’t make a sound.

"One of the Eight Precepts started punching Kirishima next, Bakugou almost got free to try and save him, but the ice overpowered him, and the chains held. All for One let Bakugou yell. Kirishima held up for what seemed like an eternity, but he couldn't keep up in the end. The villain bashed his head in the moment he let up, and his skull cracked open.

"Bakugou cried and screamed and cursed. Until a villain made of sludge, of sewer water, got into his mouth. His cries became pleas for help, for anyone to save him. He called out for All Might, for his mom and dad…just before the villain suffocated him for good…he even called for you, Izuku.

"Shouto died next, incinerated by Dabi, yelling "Brother, no!" as the flames took him. And then I was next. I thought it would be Stain, due to my history with him, but the one that carried his sword was Toga. You walked towards Ochako, and I felt my mouth could move again. I just screamed "NO!" as you playfully swung that bloodstained, dented katana. But you didn't swing it at Ochako, you turned it over.

"The chains broke down and the ice melted. Ochako took the sword from your hands, taking a couple practice swings. Her school uniform wasn't wet from the melted ice, it was covered in blood. Her eyes narrowed, her usual smile was gone. In a second, she had turned into a different person.

"Then she spoke "Do you all remember in first year, when there was a theory of a traitor among us? You could say it was me…but then again, I was never really one of you. Remember all my stories about my "poor parents"? All the misdirection with "having a crush" with that useless broccoli over there? You fell for it, completely. And you, Tenya Iida, you didn't just fall into my ruse, you fell in love with me. As if I would ever love you back, you fool!" And then she beheads me, and the dream ended."

Iida had told his story between sobs, hugged by Izuku and Shinsou, and even Toga had joined the hug when he ended, and he wasn't giving her an accusing stink eye.

When they had finally managed to calm him down, he said, "I was late because I needed to speak with Ochako, I…I just needed to be sure it had been just a dream. It felt too real, it shook me to the core…I don't know if I could take too many of these dreams. Please Shinsou, tell us you can take *him* from our brains." He was almost on his knees, pleading to the purple haired hero.

"Well, with all this information I think I have a rough idea how to keep him from having full control. Toga, you had no dreams while sedated, but Izuku had, yes?"

She nodded. "The syringe from the base used on Izuku is a different knockout drug, maybe we could try using it for dreamless sleep on you. The other thing I think about is Hatsume´s adrenalin shot, you said it woke you up?"

Izuku answered that it had. "Good, in case of an emergency, we could try an pulling out the victim from the nightmare with that, though its effectiveness when Pestilentia is giving the victim his full attention is unknown…Still it's a good possible option. Maybe keep the victims under observation as they sleep and give them the shot when they start screaming and convulsing."

Toga´s eyes lit up "Oohh…I love watching Izu-Izu sleep, I could do that!"

Shinsou looked slightly unnerved by her loving statement "Izuku, your girlfriend is being creepy, I meant having nurses or something. Though I guess it could work if it doesn't creep you the fuck out…I don't kinkshame, my friend."

He gave them a smile that looked somewhat like Eraserhead´s in those Internet memes from a

couple years back.

“You should totally ask Ocha-chan to be your…what should we call this? Nap buddies?”

Shinsou then became serious again, and said “Obviously not, that term is patented by Hatsume Industries for the final projects group consisting of Izuku, Mei Hatsume and myself! Find your own name, Nap Buddies is taken!”

Toga looked at Izuku with curiosity “Izu-Izu?”

“Oh, it’s a really fun story! On second year we had a joint project where we had to make a movie, and we also studied for the exams together. Shinsou and Mei work really hard and sometimes will go days without sleeping, so I started with the idea to be Nap Buddies! "

His excitement made Toga's heart tremble "We made a room to nap from the ground up, bought some cushions and made a good place to sleep, with soft music and everything! Then I just made them sleep!”

Shinsou added “Crazy kid cured the dark bags under my eyes for a while and all. We should nap again sometimes, Izuku.”

Before Izuku could agree, Shinsou snapped his fingers and said “Oh right, I think I have an idea for your Quirk, Izuku! One for All allows for some degree of communication with your predecessors, right?”

Izuku nodded “Added to your own mental strength from all the training we did together, I think you could overpower him.”

“I had thought to use my Quirk to snap the link, but I could only do it once.”

“I think that you could do more than that, maybe even hurt him directly. But you have to stay completely lucid and not lose sight that it is a dream, Izuku.”

“We can do it, Hitoshi. I´m going to take him down.”

Izuku looked at his clenched fist with intensity and conviction, in a pose that seriously made Toga ´s heart flutter.

“Well, good luck with that, my friend. I´ll see if I can find a surgeon that can remove the cells in any case, for Iida and Toga´s cases. I wish I could assist more directly, but they are sending me on a mission too, I don’t really know too much so far. They´re sending a few UA graduates with me, Todoroki´s wind friend and a few pros, no one too high profile.”

Knocking preceded Hatsume barging in, her overalls covered in oil stains, some type of goggles on her eyes.

“Iida! I have great news! My mom can operate Tensei! She´s here to visit, come and talk! She found a new method!”

She was bouncing up and down with energy. Iida lost all fear in his eyes, replaced with hope and joy.

“Hatsume! That is incredible! Take me there! I have to tell everyone, mom, dad, Tensei, Ochako!” His hands were already moving robotically with great energy as he left the room without waiting for Hatsume.

“Nap Buddy!” yelled Mei when she spotted Shinsou, before performing a complicated handshake with the Mind Control hero. “It’s so good to see you, Shinsou! We have to share some energy drinks when we have some time, but they are already here for you!”

“Oh, they already sent the car?”

“Yeah, Ashido is already talking the guard´s ears off. She´s on your team?”

Toga saw Shinsou blush slightly and said “She´s your crush!” Which made him blush fully.

“Uh…obviously not, we´re just teammates…and she´s annoying anyway.”

“He´s in love!” Toga was absolutely delighted with pestering Shinsou.

“Izuku, tell your girlfriend to stop bullying me, I´m just gonna go. Drinks when we´re all back?”

“You got it, Hitoshi!”

Outside, Hatsume was rushing to Iida, who had sprinted away to bring Ochako along to meet the inventor´s mom, who apparently was some sort of doctor.

Shinsou hurried to a dark sedan with government plates, smiling slightly at the Acid Hero waving her at him, half her body out through the car window. *Oh, how cute!* she thought.

A darker part of her mind, but still her own, thought *and that´s a girl less to worry about. Our love is just the two of us, Izu-Izu.*

Chapter End Notes

> Will we ever find out if there was a traitor in UA? In the first draft I was debating making Ochako the traitor all along as a different kind of rival for Toga. Thanks for reading!

In which Bakusquad eats some buffalo wings

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The press was gathered around a Japanese Armed Forces airbase on the outskirts of Tokyo, and among them was a small group of UA graduates, pro heroes curious about Deku´s statement to the media.

“Remind me again why we´re here to see that damn nerd, Kiri” had said Bakugou, in his usual annoyance, though not outright anger.

“We were having drinks later with Denki and Kyoka, and Mineta and Tokage. It was two birds with one stone, Katsuki!”

From below, Mineta added “We need to know the TRUTH!”

Bakugou sighed and said, “But I don’t give a fuck if that useless Deku is sticking his dick in crazy, I just want those drinks and buffalo wings, for fucks sake.”

Mineta thought he looked almost sad, so he changed the subject “Anyway, where are Ashido and Sero? We invited them too, and Sero never misses a chance for some wings”

Jirou answered “Mina´s on a mission, Sero´s visiting his grandma, I think” Behind the punk girl, the press had started to chatter and get excited as they saw a few people walk over to the gate and climb to a small stage. Mineta was thankful for the stage, otherwise he would have had to ask one of his friends to lift him up to see.

The people on stage were an old cowboy, a tall woman in a leather jacket, with a disciplined walk and penetrating eyes, a slightly shorter one who looked like a Viking, even in casual clothes, and their friend Izuku Midoriya, the hero Deku.

Mineta noticed bags under his eyes, likely from lack of sleep, but he looked happy and focused. There was no Himiko Toga in evidence, maybe he would just deny everything?

The old cowboy started talking “Good day, members of the press, we have agreed to a conference based on all your insistence. The order of questions has been pre-approved, please do not stray from them, alright? All four of us can answer your questions.”

Mineta saw that attractive brunette reporter who was always on the frontlines of hero work raise her hand. He approved of the networks choosing someone that pretty to go first.

“Deku, is it true you are not working with your team anymore? You have not been seen with them in almost two months, while First Response fights villains, saves citizens and does hero work. Are you splitting up with Team First Response?”

Midoriya took a microphone and answered “Oh, no, we´re still a team. I´m currently on work elsewhere, the finer details are still classified. I promise a complete interview when I´m able.”

The next reporter was a man with a ridiculous pompadour and a small moustache. “Hero Deku, you are reportedly working with an American group, don’t you think they are interfering too much in Japanese affairs?”

The cowboy answered, “We have the government´s full cooperation, and we assure you we are not operating inside Japan for this.”

The next reporter was none other than Uwabami, the Snake Hero. Sadly, Mineta couldn’t see her from where he stood.

“This question´s for Deku. Sweetie, they sent our show some pictures of you with a girl that looked very much like the disappeared villain Himiko Toga. Was that really Toga? Is it a forbidden romance? Your fans deserve the truth!”

On the stage, Midoriya flinched just slightly, almost imperceptibly, and beside Mineta, Bakugou whispered “What the fuck, Deku, you actually did it.”

A second later, Midoriya had his “hero face” on and was replying “Himiko Toga is still on the run, as far as we know. The person on the pictures is an American teammate called, uhhh…Hailey. Yeah, Hailey! The resemblance is just unfortunate, they are not the same person!”

Bakugou snarled in a low voice “They finally taught you how to lie, Deku? That was disgraceful.”

Uwabami wasn’t finished, though, “And you are dating that teammate? You seemed really close.”

“Oh no! We are just friends!” he replied, cheerfully. Apparently, that was enough to pacify most of the audience.

Setsuna wasn’t convinced “Did you see that? He totally is hiding Toga somewhere in there. Protecting your lover´s identity is hot as fuck.”

The rest of the conference was over soon. From the tidbits of information, Mineta could gather that Midoriya was on a pretty big operation with the Americans, at least as big as Ashido´s seemed to be, way above normal hero work. On most cases, hero work was reactive instead of proactive, the most that average heroes did with anticipation against villains was patrolling.

As the conference ended and Deku started to leave with the Americans, Mineta took advantage to “better examine” his female companions as they left. He was sad to see them leave, but glad to see them go, he thought as he admired the two specimens of the female form, sculpted by the gods.

“That old cowboy was a silver fox, goddamn” said Setsuna beside him.

“Those girls though…I want them to step on me.”

An annoyed and fuming Jirou looked their way “You do know I can hear all your sleazy comments, right?” Setsuna and Mineta looked at her with hurt expressions, whistling innocently.

When Jirou was distracted talking with Denki, Mineta asked Setsuna “Who were those girls, anyway? Heroes?”

“The taller one I don’t know, the hotter one was the Shieldmaiden Hero, Freya!”

“Without her braids I didn’t recognize her, I'm ashamed of myself.”

“It happens to the best of us.”

They saw Midoriya get approached by a man who looked related to him, maybe his mysterious father? It was a bit dissapointing, Mineta had imagined Midoriya's dad might be some sort of villain king with a harem...

Midoriya seemed exasperated with the man, visibly telling him a "Yes, now leave me be." There were some issues there, definitely. In the end, it seemed the older man had convinced Midoriya to meet again, but when? Midoriya seemed to have postponed that for a long, long while, but he smiled when saying goodbye.

And when he was fetched by that mistress Discipline? Mineta could only smile!

By then, Kirishima had brought around the van they were using to carpool to the restaurant, painted in bright Fat Gum livery. The body mass hero had recommended the place, “A great place to acquire tasty calories, y'all!” he had apparently said.

“At last! Shotgun!” called Bakugou, his energy contagious. Denki and Jirou took the backseats, where they kept talking quietly, Mineta and Setsuna sat in the middle. Inside, the van was surprisingly roomy, to fit the behemoth of a hero that was Fat Gum, but otherwise normal.

Mineta had expected some residual food smell on the van, but there was none. “Step on it, Kiri! Conferences make me hungry, dude!”

The van had an automatic transmission, and after a few minutes both heroes in the front seats were holding hands. Setsuna found it really cute, as she cooed and pointed discretely at their hands. Mineta was very happy for his friends, he thought they made such a great couple.

Arriving at the restaurant, a loosely All Might themed buffalo wings venue, called Power Wings, Kirishima took the lead.

“We have a table for eight booked, but we´ll only need for six, my friend!” he told the greeter, who instantly recognized him “Red Riot! I didn’t know it was you who had made the reservation! And Ground Zero! I´m a big fan, you saved my cousin a few months ago! Please accept a 20% discount, on the house!” while the greeter fawned over the group of friends, Bakugou had taken the coupons the man had offered with a predatory grin on his face.

He looked like he would really use that discount to full effect! “Oh, and the little Grape Juice! My great aunt is your fan, she loved your diaper on your first suit!”

All burst out laughing, and, embarrassed, Mineta replied “It was supposed to be a fruit bowl, but it looked like that…I changed it to be more popular!”

“It makes you look better, friend!” said the greeter, and Mineta was ridiculously proud of that.

A waiter took them to their table, a teenager a few years older who didn’t seem particularly excited to have heroes as costumers. The waiter took two chairs away and brought them the menus, leaving them some time to decide.

Immediately Kirishima and Bakugou were talking over their choices, energetically arguing for and against several options before Bakugou chose a combo with buffalo wings on the hottest sauce available, Kirishima choosing a steak burger with the same sauce, bacon and brioche buns.

Jirou and Denki shared a box of wings with a milder sauce, Setsuna chose a different burger, Mineta opted for a sampler and some macaroni and cheese.

Small talk turned to hero work, their table was discreet enough to discuss openly.

“…I used a big-ass explosion on that villain and took him down in one shot! He was full of Trigger, so he was even bigger than Mt. Lady! It was fucking glorious! Endeavor was jealous of how fast and strong I am, he didn’t even get there in time to see the fucker fall!” Bakugou

proclaimed, a chicken wing on each hand, waving them around to accent his story of taking down a cell of the Russian Mafiya, which had tried establishing a foothold in Japan, only to be quickly stamped out by the Endeavor agency.

“Oh, that´s nothing! With Fat we saved a shopping mall full of people against a horde of ninjas!” added Kirishima, his fist pumping with energy.

“It may not be a giant villain or ninjas, but we have something just as good! Kyoka´s going on tour!” Denki was ecstatic with his girlfriend´s success, even if they weren’t the most active heroes while pursuing the artistic side of heroics.

Eventually, Bakugou brought the conversation to Midoriya and his mystery girlfriend. “Damn Deku, he lied on our faces! I don’t care if his girlfriend is an insane killer, he can fuck whoever he wants, but he just lied to our faces! Its total disrespect for me, Katsuki Bakugou, his rival!”

Jirou looked at him with her usual sarcastic face and said “Aww, you are worried about your friend Deku?”

Bakugou looked slightly annoyed but not furious as he would once have been “Yeah, he is a useless Deku, obviously he worries me. Not cause we´re friends, or anything”

“Which you are.”

“Which we now are, yeah. What´s the point?”

Denki added “Anyway, think the media will know he was lying? They don’t have Kyoka´s quirk to read his heartbeat or know him like Bakugou…”

Setsuna answered “Well, he did promise another interview later on, they can go wild with speculation meanwhile. Anyone else was on the bets for who his girlfriend would be? I had a hundred yen on myself.” Mineta laughed at the small amount, his friend had sold herself a bit short, in his opinion.

“I always thought he and Uraraka would be a thing” he said when he was done laughing.

“Of course not, anyone with eyes could see they had some issues, round face acted different with him and not in a good way, Deku also was a mess around her. He only got better after we made All for One bite the dust, but there was some trouble there.” Bakugou was surprisingly concerned in his comment, his care for both Uraraka and Midoriya very apparent.

A believer on infinite parallel worlds, Mineta was sure that Bakugou was an item with Uraraka and Midoriya on some of these other universes, perhaps in the one that Mineta himself was tall and mighty, the next symbol of peace. On this universe, though, Bakugou was inseparable from Kirishima.

But with a snarl he added “I was betting on Hatsume, that crazy girl and Deku were unstoppable. Almost a match for me with both hands tied up and a hangover!”

Jirou then said, “On the first year I could have sworn he and Todoroki were going to date!”

In the end, the conversation was again changed to whatever Ashido was doing. “I heard she´s on that project with Shinsou and some from class B, anyone else know anything?” asked Denki. They all shook their heads, even Kirishima, who was close friends with the acid girl. Ashido was being uncharacteristically quiet on the subject, so it had to be something big.

Chapter End Notes

I live for slice of life with these characters, when I´m done with this fic and the second part, I´ll be doing more slice of life, it´s so comfy. As always, thanks for reading!

Worldbuilding and other evils

Chapter Notes

> I really wanted a chapter to dig a bit deeper into the possible history of the Hero Academia world, it has been pretty vague so far. We know the first Quirk baby was born in China, and that All for One is at least as old as eight generations of One for All (plus Izuku´s time) so I wanted to set up a timeline, inspired a little bit on X-Men.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“So, we´re attacking the Tselinoyarsk Institute, and you guys will strike this oilrig off the Korean coast, clear?” asked agent Anna Dobinek to her audience; Midoriya, Toga, Midoriya´s friends and Freya.

Texas Red was already gone back stateside, and the rest of her team was still engaged in Europe, currently evading pursuit from Pestilentia´s paramilitary forces.

The gathered nodded in approval. “Great. Now, our satellites found a suitable location for Tselinoyarsk in the Krasnogorje area, a few miles away from an abandoned town, Krasnograd. The town is home to an inactive nuclear reactor, shut down a few years after the Chernobyl disaster, due to fears of a similar situation.

"The town slowly died off in the next twenty years, but some military records we found from the era show Russian army traffic throughout the following decades. We have contacted a support team to help secure the town and reactor, we only have to focus on the school.”

She showed them a slide on the projector, a slightly blurry satellite image. “The area above the Tselinoyarsk Institute was scrambled against satellite photography, we had to send one of our heroes, the Space Explorer, Thunderbird, with a camera to take this picture. So obviously we have no blueprints, only speculation based on Soviet architecture, the layout and some consultant work with some experts on the subject, and with Toga´s dreams too.”

“So, it is some three stories high, unknown depth below ground, with basements pretty much confirmed by the base where you two were held at. The walls look thick and strong, reinforced concrete. And Freya says it looks like a really ugly building; I´m most inclined to agree.”

She switched to the oilrig on the projector “Now your target, is a NeuOIL rig. It’s a ten-year-old rig, with three platforms, two giant cranes and five helicopter landing zones. We had a tip from an informant on the Russian Mafia that a paramilitary group was taking the rig by force, to cut off trade along the Korean and Russian coasts.

"The enemy presence is substantial, and they have mid-range missiles that can take down merchant ships. One of Pestilentia´s top men, only known as Niven, was spotted there, so they told us.”

“Who´s leading that mission?” she asked them, she knew Todoroki, Iida and Momo were natural leaders and the rest also had a good degree of tactical thinking. Todoroki answered “I think Momo is the best to think a strategy, and Iida and myself can make decisions on the ground”

“Great. Hatsume, can we take your plane again?”

The pink haired girl, who thankfully had showered and cleaned her workshop when her mother had visited (she was just as messy as Toga, annoying the military discipline of Anna), looked at her jealously, before finally relenting “Ughhh. Not a single scratch, eh? And you are funding the *Mei II*, don’t forget it. We can get some vehicles from the government I guess…I don’t have time to make a small aircraft if we want to attack by the end of the week, that project takes its time, yeah.”

“Of course, Hatsume, we´ll pay for your second plane and you make one on contract. Would three thousand bucks be good as rent for the first?”

She waved the money on her face, her eyes zooming on the Benjamins. “Much better than just commandeering it. How much is that in yen?”

“No fucking idea, buy something nice.” She threw the stack of bills and the engineer caught it in mid-air; Hatsume had good instincts. She would probably make the best field agent if Anna could recruit her, with her Quirk she could be a superb sniper.

“Well then, you´re free to go. We meet here in two days. Don’t go marrying strippers or buying muscle cars with 45% interest.” The teenagers didn’t get her joke and left a bit awkwardly.

Midoriya and Toga stayed. “Can we have more details on the town, Colonel Bitchface?” asked Toga. Her improvement didn’t cease to amaze Anna; she had almost been shaped into a functional human being through their efforts.

“Krasnograd was home to some thirty thousand people, depended mostly on food shipments from a train connected to Soviet collective farms, and the reactor powered the town, and army bases miles away, also abandoned now.

"Some villages also mooched electricity from the plant and didn’t survive long after it was deactivated. A special forces battalion will secure the village in a joint op with Russian Spetsnaz, we don’t have to worry about it. What is your take on the school, people?”

Freya spoke first, her eyes focused “We´ll smash through and kick ass.”

Toga suddenly was brandishing a knife with her “killer face” on “I´m gonna poke the fucker full of holes for trying to screw with Izu-Izu´s brain. And cause he owes me.”

Midoriya was more reflexive, saying “We still don’t know what manner of henchmen he will have around. Or if he´ll be there. The mansion in Saint Petersburg was abandoned after we escaped, so we burned him to his stronghold, and he´s bound to bring his best men there. The best we can do is give them no extra time to prepare and strike fast, strike hard.”

“In that case we´re pretty much ready. Your gear up to standard?”

They all said yes. Freya's armour was only a bit battered from the base, and so needed little maintenance. She added “Valhalla” by Black Sabbath to her speakers, sharpened her axe, and was done.

Midoriya had received a new suit, improved by Hatsume, to better take even more punishment in battle.

The Agency had sent a new sneaking suit for Toga, in white and grey, resistant to her Transformation, as her previous one had been lost in the plane crash. An assortment of knives, daggers and Kali sticks had been given to her to use as she saw fit.

“My gear´s ready too, so I guess you´re also free. Stay on the base but apart from that, have a good

couple of days.” Her battle dress uniform and armour had been cut, torn and smashed in the fight, so she had requested a spare. It still looked shiny and new.

A battle rifle and a submachine gun would be enough to deal with all but the strongest foes for the mission, and hopefully to put a hole in Pestilentia´s head.

With Midoriya and Toga gone, she was left alone with Freya. “Up for a bit of sparring?” she asked the hero.

“Of course!”

They walked over to an empty gym, where they could fight at ease. “You want me to go easy on you, Anna? Or do I use my Quirk?”

She replied with a wink and a smile, “I´d never ask you to hold back, Freya.”

Freya was strong and fast, but Anna had better technique and instincts. It was a balance that could be upended in a single move, a frenetic dance around the opponent's mistakes. Being enhanced by her Quirk wasn’t enough for Freya on the first round, as Anna caught her arm as she over swung a punch, taking her down to the ground and getting on top of her.

“Looks like I caught you, shieldmaiden.”

“Best of three, agent?”

Freya was a quick learner, and won the next, giving Anna a giggle as she sat atop her. Soon their fighting was less punching and kicking and more grappling, takedowns and ground fighting.

The end of the third bout found them, Anna on top of Freya, their faces only centimetres away from each other. Their breathing was ragged, and their skin sweaty. Anna knew what she was going to do, and then she heard someone gasp behind them.

On an instant they had disentangled, and Anna was halfway to whoever was peeping on them.

It was Toga and Midoriya, Toga looking like she had just witnessed the funniest shit ever. “Can´t you knock, kiddos?” she snarled at them, pissed at the interruption.

Midoriya looked embarrassed, Toga just giggled and said, “We also were thinking of doing *that* kind of training, chief!”

Anna felt her face go red. “Don’t get clever on me, Toga, I was going to volunteer to get you stuff from the outside world, but you are losing that privilege, young lady!”

She got serious and said “Let´s go somewhere else, Izu-Izu, Colonel Bitchface has serious training to do with Miss Freya. If all´s good, can you bring me some takoyaki?”

“And Katsudon for me, please?”

“Sure kids, just fuck off for now, alright?”

As the kids left, she could hear Toga mumble “I called it Izu-Izu!” and Midoriya reply in the same hushed tone “We shouldn’t interrupt people like that to confirm your theories, Himiko!”

“So, what were we doing?” asked Freya from behind her.

“Oh, you know what I was about to do, Freya. Fuckin´ kids, they ruined the mood. Wanna go have

dinner or something instead?"

"Sure, meet you at the gate in thirty? I must shower first!"

"Perfect, see you in thirty!"

Was this a date? She had no time for teenage romance in this profession. She liked Freya and thought she liked her back, so it wasn't going to be complicated. Though she felt a bit nervous with her feelings, facing death hundreds of times had taken most doubt from her personality.

Yeah, it was a goddamn date, and she would show Freya a good time in town. And get those annoying kids their food too.

"State your serial number and current identity" asked a voice from behind the camera.

"132799. Irina."

"State your confirmation code."

"Cells."

"Confirmed. Proceed to interview."

99 stood up as a door slid open to her side. The hallway was lit by soft white glass panels at the sides, the floor and ceiling were metal plates. Underground, the tunnels and bunkers may have caused claustrophobia to weak minds, even with its futurist architecture, meant to prevent it.

The tunnels had been the first part of the compound to be completed, decades and decades ago. Whatever renovation had added the sleek décor had happened before 99´s time, and she had little interest to inquire on a precise date.

Behind her, the baseline room´s door closed again. It functioned as an airlock, in a way, not letting an imbalanced agent back, and preventing infiltration. The interview room was located midway to the cells where agents slept, at least those not currently on a mission.

99 walked over to the interview room, her steps making no sound on the metal floor. A weak individual may have used that to prank a friend, but she was strong, and had no consideration for either pranks or friends.

The door slid open with a soft whoosh as she approached, and behind the glass desk sat a grey-haired man with red eyes. The Lord motioned towards a chair before him, and 99 sat down.

On most assignments the debrief was done by a subordinate, perhaps Number 09, or the strict Number 32. On paper they were her superiors, and she treated them with outwards deference, but inside, she pitied them. Too old or weak for fieldwork, not good enough to be considered by the Lord to bear a new generation of servants to life.

The Lord spoke "Ninety-nine, child, it is so good you have returned. I have a few questions I wish to ask, just to clear you for your next assignment. First, I need your mission report."

99 was ready to comply "The General is dead, with his communications staff. Blackbird took them by surprise, the entire camp was KIA. No witnesses, not before Blackbird´s men, and obviously

not after. South Sudan is falling to Blackbird, city by city."

She allowed herself a small smirk; she had changed the destiny of a city by herself and altered the balance for an entire country.

"Very good, 99. Your help has been invaluable to our ally, Ndege Mweusi. What is your opinion on the mission? We are helping Blackbird commit genocide against people whose only difference from their countrymen is having a Quirk, what are your thoughts on that?"

99 scoffed "I spent two months among those people, watched their Quirks, their actions. They are weak, and don't deserve to have those Quirks, if they are not willing to even defend themselves, to organize and fight! They are depending on the Americans for everything. The second the Army landed in Africa, the locals latched onto them, almost like parasites. It is easy for them to feed off charity, to play the victim. A hundred men with strong Quirks could have stopped Blackbird before his war."

"Good, good. I agree with these thoughts, child. Now, I wish to tell you a story. You do remember your History, yes?"

"I do, Lord."

"Well, allow me to fill any gaps we might not have taught you. Remember, the Right hand must never be aware of the Left."

Before she had even thought about it, she was reciting the mantra she had been taught so long ago, even before she had learned to wield a blade "The Right Hand greets the world. The underworld shakes Pestilentia´s hand, and it is the hand that makes the deals. The punch from the Right is brutal, deadly. But the Left Hand is never seen, and it holds a blade, a second away from the world ´s throat. The Right Hand will never meet the Left, unless it is time to lose a Hand."

"Good, good. If my criminal friends knew I held their lives in my hands at all times, they would scarcely be good business partners; scared men are not the best for decisions."

"But I have a story, and the fact that I tell you in person, is an honour you will not sully with another interruption, child." His tone had barely shifted, and 99 was *afraid*, and nothing in this world made her feel that. She would hold her tongue, and let the Lord speak.

"This story officially starts in January 1947, in China. A working-class family gave birth to a baby, who glowed phosphorescently. The first Quirk. A month later, in Thailand, another baby was born, with an arm that turned into a hammer at seven months. Throughout the world, twenty babies were born that year, with Quirks active, or dormant, to awaken by their fourth birthday.

"Radiation from nuclear bomb tests was the first explanation thought for the babies´ "gifts". Half of the babies who exhibited active Quirks were quietly killed, their superstitious parents blaming demons and gods. The growth was slow, but steady. Nobody knew where Quirks were coming from.

"By 1950, the number of Quirked children was around two hundred. A few scientists noticed the pattern and established a group to study Quirks. That is all the official story tells. As you received proper education, you know more than most.

"By 1960, around two thousand people had Quirks, and governments had started to take notice. The Quirk Study Group was absorbed by the Americans and their capitalist allies, and imitated by

the Soviets, whose spies had managed to get across the Study Group´s plans in time before being found out. The Cold War was an arms race; better guns, faster planes, bigger nukes.

"Superhumans.

"Both sides tried to weaponize Quirks, hobbled only by the young age of the Quirked.

“The Soviets fired the first shot, literally. The KGB wasn’t ready to forget the Missile Crisis. A ten-year-old Uzbek kid was brought to the States and directed to give an order to a stranger in Dallas. Lee Harvey Oswald knew nothing of the shot that killed Kennedy, as the kid had brainwashed him completely. The kid was used to create sleeper agents with his Quirk, all the way to the 80´s, when he was executed by the KGB.

“Vietnam saw the first deployment of Quirks in combat, when a CIA SOG covert unit brought a thirteen-year-old with an incendiary Quirk. The kid was drugged to hell and back, barely aware of his surroundings. The SOG unit, Task Force Phosphorus, burnt village after village. One day, the drugs were not enough, and the kid saw the war crimes he had been pushed to commit, and he killed himself.

“Combat-useful Quirks were quite rare, back then, and both sides could barely muster small teams of Quirk users. In 1984 occurred the first clash among them, in Afghanistan. Both teams had massive amounts of casualties, and the Special Powered Teams, as they would go on to be known, would need much and more refinement, if they were to be useful.

“In 1986 Chernobyl happened. The Soviets evacuated not just Pripyat, Chernobyl´s town, but also Krasnograd, a town home to Chernobyl´s sister reactor. And an opportunity arose. A base was constructed, strong and mighty, and above it, a school. A place to make Quirks work for our advantage. The KGB posted an officer in command, Vasily Krasnov, and the post suited him like a glove. The second group was trained in Tselinoyarsk Institute.

“Vietnam had ended, and Afghanistan had, too. The next front for war seemed to be Europe. Tanks lined both sides of Berlin, nukes were never more than a switch away from flying. The Cold War´s tension was unbearable. The Berlin Wall fell, and the Soviet Union foundered, and almost died. Gorbachev was ready to end it, but he was never allowed to. The KGB took over, like the praetorian guard of Imperial Rome, and placed their man on top. The Cold War wasn’t over yet.

“The year 2000 came and went, and the tension of the Cold War had once again started a war. American-backed rebels had started an uprising in Cuba, aiming to overthrow the eternal Castro. The Quirked now formed more than two percent of the population, useful, useless, dangerous…it wasn’t a secret anymore. The Cuban war lasted for five years, bringing in Mexico and Vietnam along, and flattening the cities of Havana, Monterrey, Miami, and Hanoi. The Americans won in the end.

“After five years of Hot, the war became cold again, until the Soviet infrastructure could no longer take it a year later. The KGB had bought the Union sixteen years of life, at the cost of thousands of lives lost to famine and war. To the relief of the world, the Cold War had not gone nuclear.

“In 2006, as the Americans licked their wounds, shadows started to rise. In Japan, an unknown man had surfaced, taking control over organized crime almost overnight. His name was All for One, and his influence spread like wildfire.

"For ten years he ruled unopposed in Asia, his will determined events worldwide. The Japanese government was powerless to stop him and could only mitigate the casualties of his followers´ crimes. China bowed with no conditions, Korea bent the knee.

"Ten years he ruled, the possibility of external intervention halted at the root by his influence. Then, on the eleventh year, a man rose to challenge him. The “first hero”, call him romantic analysts of this forgotten era of history. I know more. He was One for All, All for One´s traitor brother.

“One for All could not defeat his brother, but the semblance of his invincibility was broken. Challenger after challenger appeared, and the outward power All for One held was cut off. He was forced to operate in the shadows, to rely on stealth.

"For seventy years, he was the World´s bogeyman. Striking from the dark and vanishing yet again. Six times he fought in the open against One for All´s successors, a gaggle of mismatched heroes. Then a symbol appeared, and his shadow hand was pried away from the world´s throat. A symbol of Peace.

“Nana Shimura, the previous One for All, was killed thirty-five years ago. Her student, All Might smashed his way through All for One´s power, isolating him and breaking his organization, starting thirty years ago.

"They danced around each other for twenty-two more years, All for One briefly appearing and getting chased away without any contender getting the upper hand. Until they finally met, and it was a clash of titans. All for One was dead for five minutes, before we got him out and jumpstarted his heart. All Might was crippled and could only stay a hero through sheer willpower.

“You know the rest. All for One´s capture, escape, and death. What you do not know, is how, for sixty years, I was the only person he considered his friend.”

“Unlike my friend, I have never held power in public, keeping to the shadows all along. My Hands have brought the world together, under me. The wars of the last fifty years…it may be arrogant to claim they have all been my brainchild, but I definitely gave them a push.

"All that death…between All for One, myself and some of our temporal allies we have kept the world population down. Just under five billion people live today, not for our lack of trying. I believe it is still too many people. A culling is needed. A new plague. A pestilence.”

He paused, his eyes shining with malice. “And that is where you come in, child. Our enemies have turned your cell sister, 98, against us, even after she was accepted as a servant to my friend, All for One. In case she does not return to our family, I look to you to fight her. She was the Alpha of your cell, as you were the Omega. Show your supremacy, when the time comes.”

99 was suddenly reminded of her cell sister, 98. If the Left Hand had taught them friendship, 98 would have been her best friend, her rival. 99 was always second best, in everything they did.

Her Quirk, Common Face, merely altered an adversary´s mind to show her as an average, common person. Her race and height would change in her opponent´s eyes, her hair colour, her eyes.

98 could turn into any person whose blood she drank, even imitating clothing, after a lot of training.

Their rivalry had never been mean spirited, based only on being the strongest, the best. But the day she had finally beaten 98, fighting in the training yard, her rival had been taken aside. She was to be given an assignment. 99 hadn’t seen her again, only heard the screaming from the projector room. After that, 99 had never returned.

Curiosity invaded 99, wondering if 98 was still the same golden-eyed killer she had known. She

could kill a stranger without a second thought.

If 98 was still inside of this “Himiko Toga”, 99 would give her a chance.

Or a quick death, should it come to that.

Chapter End Notes

As always thanks for reading! See you next time!

First Prelude

Chapter Notes

The crew has to hurry up and wait before their decisive battle.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Knowing it was a real place made the dreamscape even more terrifying. The shadows were longer than on most dreams, the place darker.

Toga knew what was coming. She walked up the stairs, along the hallway, into the room where she had been strapped to a chair and her mind broken with images of death and destruction, with commands and horrible sounds, with the Quirks of instructors and doctors.

It had all been real, not just a villain fucking with her mind inventing nightmare scenarios. It was an almost unaltered memory.

This time she ignored the pain, took refuge inside her own mind. Around her, the sequence happened as before, until her target was shown to her.

It was Izuku.

She would never do it, she would not hurt him. But her body moved on its own. She was a passenger. She walked out of the building, and as she crossed the outer gates, her vision faded.

Toga was awake then. She looked up at the ceiling, the panels looking blurry. Beside her was Izuku, and she could sort of see his form, in the fog at the edge of her vision.

She tried to move, to breathe a sigh of relief, but she was paralyzed. An unstoppable force held her in place, shadows creeping just beyond her sight.

She felt panic start to rise as she tried to move her eyes, to look around. She couldn't move, she couldn't scream.

And then she felt a hand close around her throat, cold and unyielding. She was pulled away and turned around, and she felt all sensation leave her body.

She was looking at herself below, half cuddled with Izu-Izu. The Toga below opened her eyes, looking straight at her, and smiled. Toga could only look as her body grabbed her knife from the bedside table, took it out of its sheath, and put her finger on her lips, as if to say, "stay quiet".

Toga saw her body get on top of Izuku, who only moved slightly in his sleep, and start stabbing him.

In the chest, neck, face…Izu-Izu had no time to react, he had been stabbed half a hundred times before he could open his eyes. Toga screamed with all her lungs. *No, no, no, NO! Why? He…he can´t be dead, he can´t be gone…No, NO!*

Her eyes burst open as she woke up.

Her lungs were empty, like she had been underwater till the point of drowning, and she tried to breathe. Her throat was in pain, her vocal cords strained.

Toga´s lower leg had cramped up and she couldn't even move her toes. And there was something else hurting her, a large needle stuck on her arm. *The adrenalin shot.*

The syringe was removed carefully, and the area disinfected with some alcohol on a cotton bud. Toga felt tears stinging in her eyes as she came to the realization that it had all been a nightmare.

Izu-Izu was alright, had pulled her out from the nightmare and had wrapped her in a comforting embrace. Toga ran her hand on his neck, his back, his hair. Half the tears she cried were of happiness, that it hadn´t been true.

I fell for goddamn sleep paralysis! Motherfucker! I´m on the other side of the bed for fucks sake!

"He got me good, Izu-Izu…the first dream didn't do a thing, so he did this stupid trick. Sleep paralysis, then he made me watch my body kill you. I…it was…I will never do that to you. I don't care how much anyone fucks with my mind, I´m not going to hurt you."

Izuku just held her tighter "I trust you, Himiko. We are going to stop him." They stayed cuddled for the rest of the night, even when Toga knew she would not be able to sleep.

Awake, she was safe. She could take her of herself and she had Izuku by her side.

Asleep, she was vulnerable.

The goddamn nightmare had seriously put her in a bad mood, even more compared to the high spirits she had fallen asleep with.

Sleeping all night on the same bed as her love, her official boyfriend, after making out for quite a while…she was having the time of her life. She was starting to think they might even take their relationship even further…at a pace comfortable for the two.

Izu-Izu had been through a lot of shit in his life and he had told her a couple of times he felt he wasn't good enough. A part of Toga had wanted to hurt everyone who had planted those doubts in her precious boy´s mind.

And Toga herself…she knew each and every crime she had to pay for, and, as much as it made her happy to have Izu-Izu, it hurt her knowing that he was involved in all this Pestilentia bullshit because of her.

So, they may as well take their time, make sure it was as good a moment as they had dreamt. *And I ´ve dreamt of that a lot, oh yes.*

With her lewd thoughts she involuntarily caressed Izuku´s scarred arm. *I fucking love your scars, baby. Each one has a story…*Izu-Izu stirred, opening his eyes a bit. Toga didn't stop softly dragging the tips of her fingers along the scars.

Softly, she asked "Hey, how did you get this one?"

With a sleepy smile, he replied "Fighting Shouto on the Sports Festival."

"And this one?"

“Stain.”

She moved upwards with every question. “This one?”

“When I saved Kouta.”

“And here, on your shoulder?”

“That knife last week?”

“Aww, Izu-Izu…” she cooed and planted a kiss on the scar. “How about the one on your neck?”

“All for One with a wind-blade, he only grazed me, but he broke Kacchan´s ribs…I don’t really remember all that fight, Himiko.” He looked a bit sad as he gazed into the distance.

“You know what would be cuter than a scar? A little bite!” Giggling, she nibbled at his neck, in the curve where neck met shoulder. She wasn’t biting him hard, so it tickled him, and he laughed as well.

“Himiko, that´s gonna leave a mark!”

“I know!” She smiled, still tracing her fingers on him. “You look sleepy, Izu-Izu, you don’t have to stay awake for me, I´ll be okay.”

He looked like he wanted to say something but could only yawn instead. She whispered, “Shhh, go to sleep, my hero”, kissing his ears and giving him a final kiss on the lips. In seconds he was asleep again, *I´d probably need clorophorm to sleep that quickly.*

The next morning, Izuku awoke to the smell of bacon and pancakes, which Toga was preparing on the kitchen of the base house they had been given, shared with the Shieldmaiden Freya.

At six a.m., Freya had left for her morning workout, the last they would get before the mission. Toga herself had left the bed at 2 in the morning and spent a few hours training with her weapons of choice, some of the guns on base, even some cardio and weights.

In the weight room she had been joined by Ochako, to her unending surprise. “Can´t sleep?” asked Toga.

“Had a nightmare. A normal one, though. I´m too tired to fight with you, but too sleepless to go back to bed.”

“Same. Spot me?”

“Sure.” Ochako stepped behind her as she squatted with the bar.

“Hey, Ochako?” she asked between reps “I´m really sorry about everything I said, you know, when we fought.”

Ochako took a few seconds to answer “I don’t think you really need to apologize for that…it was a duel to the death, wasn’t it?”

After another rep, Toga answered “I guess it was. I just want you to know I´m really sorry for saying it. It was hurtful, and wrong.”

“I also called you horrible things, if you forgive me, I forgive you.”

“Deal. Can you add some more weight?”

With a new plate on each side, Toga had to make a bigger effort. “Anyway…you and Iida, huh?”

Ochako was probably blushing behind her “I still don’t know how I feel about all that. I care for him a lot…”

“I´mma interrupt and say that you smell like you already like him.”

“That smell thing is still creepy, Toga.”

“Oh, I know! Give yourself the chance, Ochako, he´s head over heels. And you smile when you look at him, don’t you?”

“I´m not gonna deny that. Can I get my turn now?”

“Gimme more weight, I can do one more set!”

Now it was heavy, she was really straining. Ochako´s Quirk gave her confidence, though. “Fuck, here we go, I think this is my new max, Ochako.”

At the seventh rep she felt her legs going wobbly, so she backed up to the squat rack, putting the bar on it.

“My turn” said Ochako, who was looking more fired up than before, and Toga took up position to spot the hero.

An hour later, both girls were sweaty and a lot more at ease with each other, less like toddlers who had been forced to wear one big shirt after a fight and more like acquaintances, if not yet friends.

As they left to shower at their respective lodgings, Ochako called out to her “You are much better when we´re not trying to kill each other, Toga.”

“Same!” she had answered before they parted. *Was that the start of a beautiful friendship?*

At 5.30 she had heard Freya´s ringtone, a rather old and cheerful soundtrack piece from a movie about midgets throwing jewellery into volcanoes.

The hero had then taken a shower and braided her hair (Toga had made a mental note to get the hero to braid her hair when possible) and then gone out for a run and some boxing. And Toga had gone on to her cooking. She wanted to make breakfast for Izuku, perhaps subconsciously expecting approval from his mother when she heard.

By 6.30, Izuku had woken up and joined her in the kitchen, his first instinct being to offer his help. As the base around them woke up, the soldiers singing cadence as they ran, the trucks and jeeps driving…Toga and Izuku ate a nice, simple breakfast, and the world seemed perfect. *A good way to spend our last day before the operation.*

Outside, Hatsume and Yaoyorozu had gone to meet a helicopter and soon the sound of metal on metal could be heard. “Himiko, you're going to need to be well rested for the mission, when I return from training, we´ll take a nap?”

“Hell yeah, Izu-Izu.”

She was still a bit shaken, but if Izuku was going to watch over her she could sleep a while, if all went well, she´d likely sleep well for the rest of time.

Shouto opened his eyes groggily, as the alarm on Momo´s phone went off. They always woke up at the same time, to get ready for the day and share their breakfast, so they only really needed one alarm.

His vision was slightly obscured by something dark, smooth and silky, in an instant he knew it was Momo´s hair. He loved her hair, how the raven black contrasted with her pale skin, and he loved even more when another colour was added with her blushing cheeks.

He smiled, a bright, wide smile that most people would never see. He remembered taking some silly poetry course early on the second year, to learn how to better express his feelings for her.

Soon the piano music on the phone woke Momo up. Shouto shuddered slightly as she moved beside him, their skin rubbing slightly. Momo was secretly very self-conscious about her skin; if she used her Quirk too much, her skin could get irritated and itchy, and she was always extremely embarrassed when that happened.

Shouto didn't care, he loved everything about Momo, her imperfect perfection.

With a groan, Momo had turned off the alarm and started blinking away sleep. And then, as if hit by lightning, Momo had remembered something "The helicopter is arriving in a while! We should get ready to meet them!"

In an instant, Momo had turned from a half-asleep girl into her bouncy self. With a smirk, Shouto asked "How long is that while? Short enough we´ll have to share the shower?"

It took a couple of seconds for Momo to understand what he was implying, and she blushed. Shouto loved that vision, a goddess smiling shyly.

A good while later they walked over to the helipad where the Yaoyorozu helicopter would land. "You two are in a good mood" remarked Hatsume.

With a shared look full of mischief with Momo, Shouto said "Those showers are pretty good."

A few minutes later, the helicopter arrived, a pilot in YaoCorp uniform leaping from the cockpit. "Miss Yaoyorozu, our fastest helicopter, as requested."

With a very low bow, the pilot had then darted off to the military base´s gate, where a car would pick him up.

"He didn't even ask if any of us knew how to fly it?" Hatsume seemed surprised at the employee´s behaviour.

"Shouto can fly it!" Momo replied.

Shouto was a bit embarrassed when he said "Uhhh…Natsuo taught me, we, ah, we stole one of Endeavor´s helicopters one time."

“That´s pretty cool, dude. I´ll be the gunner then!”

“Gunner?”

“We are adding some Babies to this bad boy to fly us into battle, nothing too big.”

Shouto decided he would try practicing a bit on the military´s simulators, and maybe spar a bit with Iida and Tsuyu, while Momo and Hatsume worked on the aircraft.

Already talking energetically, Hatsume had pulled out a huge metal lunchbox for Momo. Shouto was really happy Momo had someone challenging to talk technology and materials with, no one on their hero classes had been anywhere close to that level of knowledge on the subjects; not even Izuku could keep up with Momo and Mei when they got really technical.

Leaving his girlfriend with the inventor, Shouto toured the base looking for helicopter simulators. Worldwide military forces had been streamlined, with the old powers, Russia, China and the United States, having at their largest a few hundred thousand troops, most as support personnel.

Japan devoted its small army mostly to disaster relief, with a few units prepared for military reaction, just as a caution. Korriban airbase was assigned to Special Operations, and thus, Shouto was sure he would find his simulator.

A few airmen were gathered around it, waiting for the last of them to complete a simulation, to either congratulate him on his success or mock his performance.

The airman didn’t make it to the leader board, and his companions weren’t about to let him get away scot free. Shouto wasn’t interested in such a competition, only in remembering what he and his brother had learned on that stolen chopper.

Inside, the simulator was built in the shape of a cockpit, adjustable for attack helicopter and transport helicopter modes. Momo´s chopper resembled more a transport, so he selected that option. The software was easy enough to use, and he was able to easily chose a similar enough aircraft.

“Mission 1: Lift-off” He would start from the basics.

A couple of hours later he had a small crowd of airmen around his age, cheering him on as he piloted the simulated attack gunship on the 28th Mission: Mountains and AA Guns, where his gunship would fly around a mountain range clearing out insurgent camps in a war waged more than a hundred years past.

Shouto had somehow let the competition get to his head and was bellowing orders to a junior airman that had joined him as his gunner. With the last position eliminated, Shouto turned the gunship away for refuelling, and the scenario ended.

The airmen cheered “Frostburn! Frostburn!” He gave his simulated gunner, Junior Airman Tanikaze a handshake and offered the band of soldiers some drinks when he returned from the mission, which again made them cheer.

Leaving the airmen, he met his fellow heroes in one of the gyms, an indoor basketball court outfitted with tatami for martial arts. Iida trotted laps around the gym, Tsuyu was climbing a rope, Tokoyami conferred with Dark Shadow.

Izuku had joined them, without Toga, and was doing some push ups on the tatami as Ochako counted the repetitions. They seemed to be on much better terms, and for that Shouto was glad.

With enough tension, the group could have split up, and he didn't want that, at all.

A moment later they were joined by Izuku´s fellow agents, one of them a hero from the Nordic Confederation. Shouto still hadn´t formed his opinion on her, she seemed an intelligent, kind hero, perhaps hindered by the language barrier, and quite powerful, even if she was unassuming and not particularly intimidating out of her armour.

The agent reminded him of Jirou, always exasperated by the bullshit, but with a ready smile for her friends. It seemed she liked Izuku well enough, and that Toga apparently annoyed her quite a lot.

Since they were set to leave just after midnight, all the heroes present were unleashing pent up stress with exercise, before they would have to "hurry up and wait" to be deployed.

Izuku was the first to be done, after sparring with every one of his teammates and both agents, and then after groups of two, Shouto teaming up with Tsuyu to fight him. Izuku won the best of three against each one, and only lost against a four-person team consisting of all his teammates. With a smile he left them in the end, looking eager for a shower.

By the time everyone felt satisfied with their performance, Shouto felt really confident on the team, that oil rig was as good as theirs.

Going outside again to check on Momo, he found the helicopter completely different than when it had arrived; wall panels strewn about and replaced with lightweight grey panels that looked sleek and strong, an assortment of different things mounted on it, some looking like missile launchers.

Hatsume was hauling a seat outside from the small passenger bay, Momo crafting a replacement in parts from her left arm. It seemed like it would still take a while, so he decided to bring her some of her favourite tea on a thermos as she worked.

Back in the base house they had been assigned to, a few houses away from Izuku´s and next to Iida ´s. Basic furniture was provided in this kind of housing for soldiers who started families and couldn't stay in the barracks, and at the moment he was looking for a particular piece of furniture, the small cabinet where they had stored their tea.

He took the fancy metal box containing Momo´s tea and added the leaves to a teapot. For a second, he felt his scar hurt as he touched the teapot, memories he had already made his peace with flaring up again.

He had forgiven his mother, he was not going to be afraid of boiling liquids. With a flourish, he lit the gas stove using his flames. While the liquid boiled, he looked for a suitable bottle, soon finding one.

As the water boiled, the fragrant aroma filled the air. He bottled the tea, and brought it back to his girlfriend, who was now making some cables for the helicopter.

"I brought you tea" he said with a soft smirk as he offered the thermos flask. Momo´s face lit up with a smile, and she elegantly sipped at the beverage.

Shouto never ceased to be amazed with how graceful Momo was, even when dressed in overalls and as covered in oil as her friend Hatsume always was. It probably had to do with the way she lifted her pinkie finger in a ladylike way to drink.

"The chopper will be ready soon! With these upgrades they´ll never stand a chance!" beamed Hatsume, interrupting Shouto and Momo´s intimate eye contact.

That was good, the sooner their ride was ready, the sooner they could hurry up and wait.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! I really didn´t think I would really do as much TodoMomo for this fic, but it sort of happened; I rather like that ship.

The Second Prelude

Chapter Notes

Another look through the enemy´s eyes, and a bit more time to go before the fight...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

99 sat beside the Lord as he activated his Quirk, closing his eyes, leaning back in his armchair. Around stood a few others, a couple of Right Hand underbosses, and five Left Hand assassins. Her soldiers, the officers she had selected to defend Tselinoyarsk.

The Right Hand would provide the muscle, protecting the village and the nuclear reactor, as well as a perimeter along the school. They were almost an army themselves.

Inside, Lord Pestilentia had given her joint command with one of the agents from their sibling cell.

The Left Hand was divided in four groups. Two were retired assets; breeders and instructors. Instructors would teach the young, perform logistical tasks and debrief agents. The terms were somewhat animalistic, as was necessary.

Breeders were selected since childhood by their strength and their Quirks, how well they adapted, how fierce they fought. Mediocre, weak children could become agents and retire to be instructors. The strong would create the future, and breed.

In the 13th generation, 2nd division, 7th cell, ninety-nine trainees had started, forty-five boys and forty-four girls.

By the time they had turned seven years old, a third had died. By their tenth birthday, the weak and the strong had been selected.

Six males and ten females. Among them had been 99 and her “sister” 98, “Himiko Toga”. That name made 99 want to puke, she couldn’t believe 98 would have let herself go so weak as to rely on names.

But not all children were trained for the same job. While the 2nd Division made spies, infiltrators, assassins, the 1st made super soldiers.

By careful breeding (and at times, abduction) the 1st Division trained children to be unstoppable killing machines, their Quirks related to strength, size or resistance enhancement.

A 16-year-old soldier was more than a match for a fully armed and armoured Mountain Brigade commando twice his age. Sadly, mortality rates for the 1st division were almost 90%, so 99 only had a handful to use.

Her command was joint with one of these super soldiers, 121842, or 42.

He had a prodigious strength enhancement Quirk, five years of combat experience at the age of 20 and was probably the best tactician in the 1st division. The tall, blond soldier was also the one selected to be her mate when they were both retired, so they had worked together previously.

42 was good at what he did, was an efficient agent, and was the strongest, so 99 respected him.

With more time they might have gathered more power around them, but 99 felt confident no man could break her defences.

But her thoughts were interrupted, as the Lord had opened his eyes and made a small sound of anger.

“She grew a bit of spine since last time, and someone on their side found a cheap counteract to my power. No matter, we are not likely to gain anything of value from any of these people at this point. 99, child, give me the report.”

“All ready, my Lord.”

“Good. You two, progress with your crews?”

The two underbosses nodded, and one answered, “We are a day away on my area.”

The other said “Around thirty hours for mine, boss.”

“I want everything on a dead man trigger. See to it that nothing stops us.” The two men left, sparing the group of young adults around Pestilentia another scared glance. Most people grew afraid when they looked them in the eye. “Suit up, children. We have one of your own to welcome back.”

99 left Pestilentia´s solar, heading to her cell to pick up her gear.

An armoured sneaking suit, a length of green cloth from her first mission she used to tie her hair in a bun, a high frequency blade; a short sword, similar to a ninjato, which vibrated at a high speed, allowing for cutting through metal, an armour piercing submachinegun she could wield singlehandedly, a combat knife, a belt of grenades.

98 would not survive a clash against her.

Back in the command room she would occupy, adjacent to the Lord´s chambers, she met the rest of her officers, including 42, who looked imposing in his black and red up-armoured battle dress uniform, a “1st Division Tselinoyarsk” patch proudly on his shoulder.

“You ready for them, 42?”

“Anytime. Intel says they have one with strength enhancement too. I will enjoy breaking him in two.”

After sparring with his teammates and exercising for a good while, Izuku Midoriya felt good with himself, confident in the mission and his own skills. He had worked up quite the sweat, so he would have to take a good long shower before getting Himiko to sleep.

He couldn’t let her go on a dangerous mission when it was so clear that she needed the rest. Pestilentia had been relentless with the nightmares as the day had approached, and now they had just a few hours to catch their eight hours before the fight.

The final fight. Would Pestilentia fight them himself? Try to do something to their brains? On a straight up fight Izuku was confident he could absolutely wreck an elderly man!

He had been lost in his thoughts and entered the base housing without realizing, he was already in the small, cheaply furnished living room.

“Oh hey, Izu-Izu! I heard you mutter you were going to punch an old man and had to come and ask!” Himiko peaked in from the bathroom, a toothbrush in her mouth (she was quite proud of keeping her teeth and fangs healthy).

“I was just thinking about beating Pestilentia, that´s all…”

She pouted and said “Just when I thought I had brought you to the side of chaos! Where we kick grandpas and steal candy from babies!” They both laughed for a good moment, then stayed watching each other´s eyes.

Izuku liked those golden eyes, flecked with tiny green and amber lines. “Did I ever tell you I really love your eyes?”

“A few times, yeah. I like it very much every time you say it.” Her smile was soft.

And then she continued brushing her teeth while keeping eye contact, daring him to laugh with a few eyebrow raises. Izuku couldn’t help but smile wide.

Those playful eyebrow raises reminded him somehow of when they had been stuck in Okinawa, when Himiko had brainstormed a whole list of “cute nicknames” for him, a few hours before he asked her to hide from his rescuers and slip past unnoticed.

“Uh, Himiko…are you going to need the bathroom for a lot more?”

He heard the water running in the sink briefly. “I´m done, you´re showering?”

“Yeah”

“Enjoy your shower then! The right´s the hot water!” Toga had washed at some point of the early morning, as her hair still seemed a bit damp.

She left for the living room, sitting down on the couch and pulling out her phone, as Izuku closed the door he could listen to muffled music, an old rock song. Himiko had a very varied music taste, he had found, but her favourites were all in Izuku´s playlist.

The water was hot and had pretty good pressure, considering the “lowest bidder” quality that sometimes could be seen on military installations and housing, and Izuku found himself happily humming the jingle All Might had used in the Silver Age.

Two things came up in his thoughts: how improbable it was that All Might had become such a big part of his life, had become his dad; and that he had never learned to whistle.

Then again, did people even whistle in the age of Quirks? He remembered Kacchan would whistle all the time, and that it was kind of obnoxious, though it bothered him less than that classmate who thought he was a band drummer and didn’t stop playing with his pens on his table…

He finished washing himself thoroughly, and spent some more minutes in, just enjoying the warmth. Finally, with a sigh, he turned off the shower, and dried himself.

He looked at himself in the mirror, feeling kind of proud of how he wasn't as much of a babyface anymore. He put on some cologne, a gift from his mom, and his clothes.

Izuku left to join Toga in the living room, sitting next to her. "So there´s fifteen hours before we have to get ready, wanna see a movie or something?"

Himiko nodded, and sprawled on the couch, resting her head on Izuku´s lap "Play with my hair?"

"Sure." With one hand Izuku softly massaged her scalp, with the other he switched on the tv, looking for something interesting, before they finally settled on some old film about a Quirkless vigilante, a different version than the one Izuku knew, this one apparently danced and had infinite ridiculous gadgets in his belt. It was the kind of film Tsuyu loved and would often get Tokoyami to watch with her in the Team´s lounge.

"Could you scratch a bit to the left? Oooh, yeah. There. I love this, it gets my head all relaxed. Do you also get those tingles in your neck when people play with your hair?" said Toga, her eyes closed as she leaned in to the gentle head massage.

"Yeah, I get them too!" he replied "Even more when its you" he added in a softer tone. Toga was blushing, he didn't know if from the pleasant sensation on her head or by what he had said.

They kept on watching for a while, the plot seemed to involve the hero and his sidekick escaping from a villain´s lair, where they dangled from a rope over a shark tank.

Izuku wasn't paying too much attention, he just delicately traced shaped on her scalp, using his nails to scratch it ever so slightly. He traced in the shape of the kanji for her name, saying "When all this is over, are you changing your name? Will you reclaim your birth name?"

She looked up at him and replied "Maybe legally, I dunno…but I kinda want to keep being Himiko Toga. Maybe just because it sounds really nice when you say it all breathy and looking into my eyes like you are about to give me a wedding ring or you whisper it with a hug…I kinda like it. I probably only like one thing better, though, how you caress my ear when we kiss."

He knew what she was talking about, it was kind of instinct, he guessed "Like this?" Their lips met for a long moment, and she shuddered as he touched the mentioned ear, gently.

Himiko sat back up after the kiss ended, kneeling on the couch, leaning in to get really close to Izuku. "How about you, Izu-Izu…do you like little things like that?" She looked at him longingly, opening her mouth slightly, showing her teeth.

"I actually really liked that little bite last night" he replied earnestly, then he smiled mischievously "And how cute you look when you close your eyes when we kiss!"

"You´re not supposed to keep them open, Izu-Izu, what the hell!" she answered in mock annoyance, before she smiled again, and got closer. They were a centimetre or two apart now.

"No peaking this time, eh?" she said. They kissed again. Izuku felt their tongues meet, it was as exciting as fighting a villain, as free falling from a plane. She was aggressive and dominant, but he didn't give ground.

When they separated for air, Izuku felt himself blush; his left hand was on her back, touching her soft skin directly under her tank top. Instead of meeting his lips again, Himiko went for his shoulder, nibbling gently all the way up his neck.

Izuku shivered, it was a very sensitive area, and it felt great. As she made it to his ear, she kissed it

a few times “I like these ears” she said, her warm breath tickling his ear and all his spine.

Then she bit slightly harder on his neck, giving him an intoxicating mixture of pain and pleasure. “*Oh God did I just find my fetish?”* he thought.

Before he could fully think his next move, they were both removing the other´s shirt, and tossing them to the ground. Izuku could see much more of her skin than he had before, he could see quite a few scars in her abdomen and her shoulders, mostly from bladed weapons, but also one from a gunshot, and one that looked like a slash made with claws.

The scars were part of her, and he thought she was beautiful with them.

“The pants too, Izu-Izu!” she commanded, her face a giant blushing smile. He had no power to say no, and his eyes were transfixed by Himiko´s agile fingers undoing the buttons on her shorts.

Her hands ran across his chest, back and abdomen, exploring every inch of skin. Izuku yelped when she lowered her hands and grabbed his ass.

“I only expect you to do the same, baby” she said, placing his hands on her skin, giving a pleased sigh as he touched her. They kissed, again and again, losing sight of the world around them. Izuku moved to the left just a bit, and they both fell down. The ground wasn’t too hard, so they didn’t get hurt. They only broke out laughing.

They hugged on the floor, feeling their warm skin touching, holding tightly.

“Hey, Izu-Izu?” she asked, looking into his eyes, as she breathed a bit more heavily than normal “You wanna go all the way? I…I understand it if you don’t think we are ready for it…” she said, her voice almost a whisper.

“I…yes, let´s do it. We could die tomorrow, and I don’t want to die with regrets.”

Her smile was so bright, so happy…and then she said sarcastically “You mean you don’t wanna die a virgin, huh?”

With a deadpan voice, he replied “Well, that too. So, to the room? The light is nicer there…”

“Yeah, let’s go. I kinda don’t wanna die a virgin either.” Izuku picked her up, bridal style, and they entered the room, discarding any remaining underwear along the way.

Freya held Anna´s hand as they watched the movie, a very old film about a Quirkless hero fighting some sort of clown in the fictional city of Gotham, with an unbeatable strategy; beating goons while dancing twist.

The movie was about to end its hour and a half runtime, with some sort of fight, she guessed. They were cuddled in Anna´s bed, eating snacks they had brought from outside.

From the apartment next door, they started to hear some muffled sounds. Was that…moaning?

Freya looked at Anna with a smirk “So the youngs did get to that kind of wrestling, huh?”

When Anna connected two and two, she brought her palm up to her face, as she blushed. “Goddammit Toga” she hissed, before grabbing her headphones.

“Oh shit” she said as she came to a realization “We need a new apartment, Freya. The walls are too

thin and I´m not dealing with a smug Toga tomorrow."

She pulled Freya´s hand leading her out of the bedroom. At least they were still dressed…"Wait so we are still?" asked Freya.

Anna looked at her and smirked "Obviously."

Anna knocked on the door of a base house as far as they could from the apartment they had left. A middle-aged woman appeared, with two kids on thrall "I´ll make you a deal, ma´am, you take this noise cancelling headphones, this portable gaming console for the kids, and a hundred bucks, and you let us switch houses with you for a few hours. Deal?"

The military wife answered shrewdly "Make it two hundred, and I keep the headphones."

"A hundred and fifty, and it's a deal."

"Deal." The wife switched keys with them and went on her way.

"Don't worry, we´ll clean any mess, Freya"

"Izuku, is that a bite on your neck?" asked Shouto as both teams walked up to their respective aircraft, suited up and ready to go. Shouto had been given a pilot helmet and vest to go over his hero suit; the cold weather version, since they were operating in the cold sea between Japan and Vladivostok, Russia.

Izuku blushed completely, while Toga gave them all a crooked grin and held Izuku´s hand tighter.

"It's just uhh…mosquitos. Yeah, mosquito bites!" he stammered. In a deadpan tone,

Tsuyu asked "Is there a reason those mosquitos' bit along that line of hickeys, Izuku-chan?"

Momo and Shouto exchanged a curious glance. In grave, dramatic manner, Tokoyami added "We only jest, Midoriya, we shouldn't presume to gossip about your carnal activities, even if they were loud and obnoxious, and Tsu-chan could not watch her film."

Shouto thought he could hear Hatsume's mouth hit the floor in surprise, and Uraraka almost crush Iida´s hand in some residual anger.

Trying desperately to change the subject, Izuku adressed his team with a speech:

"See you on the other side, guys. I´m proud of all of you, you are all great heroes, and I´m happy to call you my friends." Izuku teared up a bit as he said goodbye, giving each of them a hug.

Shouto embraced his friend tightly when it was his turn "No getting captured or anything this time please, brother. Take care, we all love you." Izuku was the best at hugs, thought Shouto as they departed.

Helmet on, flight checks completed, Shouto took the stick, and the helicopter gunship rose to the skies.

Beside them, the *Mei* took to the air, rising above the helicopter and switching its thrusters back, it sped away. It looked different on the hands of a pilot other than Hatsume, slightly more mechanical flying, slower, though probably much safer.

“This is First Response, we are off to the AO, over. Wish us luck.”

Chapter End Notes

I can only imagine how much wall soundproofing UA needs with all the hormonal teenagers living in their dorms. Thanks for reading!

Dogfight

Chapter Notes

Mini-chapter, the fight starts in the sky.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Holy Diver looked out the airplane window to see their support forces already engaged with the enemy, fighting in the town below. The Russians had provided armoured support, which was rolling through the fields, pelting the houses with fire while artillery on both sides tried to get a hit on the other.

A militia column of tanks was rolling from the north, ready to engage their allies. “I didn’t expect a whole battle down there” she told Freya, as an American drone started raining fire on some hard targets, before being taken out by an anti-air missile.

“Pilot, avoid the firing range of those SAMs, we´ll land when we have air superiority." Surface to Air Missiles were no joke.

As the *Mei* circled around the battlefield at a safe distance, their sensors detected aircraft. “Friendly?” she asked the pilot.

“Enemy bogeys! Bound for our position! Sit down and buckle up. Midoriya, what weapons are on board?”

Midoriya walked over to the co-pilot seat, switching on a nifty helmet that assembled itself and connecting it to a cable.

“We´ve got flares, chaff, implosion missiles and a capture net for giant villains.”

“Not exactly a fighter, this plane, but it´ll do.”

The pilot, a Japanese kid they had picked at the airbase, Airman Tanikaze, punched the throttle and pulled on the flight stick, taking them up.

“Midoriya, I´m going to try and lose them with altitude. Tell me what kind of planes they are.”

Midoriya looked at a screen with an array of data that Holy Diver had no idea how to understand, and answered “MiGs, latest model, air superiority fighter configuration.”

“Tough bastards, we need to be nimble to survive this!”

The plane aimed its nose to the sun, the viewscreen darkening to the light. At the speed the *Mei* could go, they could outrun the pursuers with enough clear skies, but the radar gave them another warning “Two more bogeys on intercept path! Three more ready to flank us!”

“Pestilentia has the goddamn air force in his pocket?” she asked no one in particular, as the G-force built inside the plane to “roller coaster on a 20-meter drop” level.

“I´m taking it vertical!!!”

Alarms pierced the air “Missiles!” said Midoriya in fear.

“The countermeasures, now!” Izuku pressed buttons on the co-pilot´s stick anxiously, and they heard three explosions, one after the other, each one a bit closer.

“The fourth missile is still there! It’s turning!” One of the fighters was manipulating it manually!

“Flares and chaff will not work with this one, we have to outrun it, outmanoeuvre it!” yelled Tanikaze from the pilot´s chair.

The G-force increased; around Toga and Freya formed bubble helmets filled with some sort of foam padding, from the collars Hatsume had provided. Anna had her own helmet, as did Midoriya and Tanikaze.

“Himiko, connect to the plane!” Small tubes dangled from the ceiling to give everyone pressurized oxygen inside their helmets. When everyone plugged in, Tanikaze purged the atmosphere, making the plane lighter.

The missile was seconds away. The G-force increased with the speed. “I´ll have to do the Cobra, the missile accelerates faster than the plane!”

“What the fuck´s the Cobra?” asked Anna.

“Just close your eyes and try not to puke. Midoriya, fire an implosion missile on my mark!” Anna closed her eyes, and then felt her stomach lurch inside her as the world moved everywhere at once. She heard the sound of a vacuum sucking in the air outside the cabin at a frighteningly close distance, and then the alarms stopped.

“We are out their range. It would take them minutes to reach us here.”

Quite a few ragged breaths later, Ganikaze said “We´ve got a message from the USAF, friendly fighters are in the area, armour destroyed Anti-Air defences. We can land!”

Tanikaze took the plane back, as the fighters from both sides zoomed by, fully engaged in furious dogfighting.

Below, it seemed the allies were pushing the enemy back, winning for the moment. And Russian reinforcements were already on the way, a VDV battalion in helicopters.

“Breach and clear. Midoriya, take Toga and clear the lower levels. Freya and I will sweep the top and prevent reinforcements from reaching you.” The pilot hovered over the school and shot two implosion missiles, one at the roof and one at the yard, opening a pair of meter-wide holes.

“Feet first into hell, Izu-Izu?” asked Toga to her boyfriend.

Before the boy had time to answer, Freya had walked over to the platform “All the way, oorah!”

Then the Shieldmaiden jumped down through the first opening, her armour already blasting music.

“Your girlfriend got my helljumper reference, General Bitchface, you have taste!” said Toga as Izuku jumped with her piggybacking on him.

“Ughh, why didn’t I get super Quirks that stop legs from breaking?” Anna said as she fast roped into the building.

Chapter End Notes

The next one is chunky and a bit more momentous, so I decided to keep this one short. The battle continues next time!

Duelo a muerte...con cuchillos

Chapter Notes

> Deku and Toga face their dark counterparts in a deadly encounter...
> For this chapter´s mood, I recommend "Taking the Field" from Medal of Honor (2010), "Iron" by Woodkid and "Not Another Hallway" from the Daredevil Season 3 soundtrack.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Deeper and deeper they went into that underground maze. Toga ran beside Izuku as they searched every corner.

Izuku felt a change of pressure in the air behind them, and barely had the time to get Toga out of the blast as a soldier in some sort of battle armour shot at them with a rifle.

From the ceiling were rappelling two other soldiers and three commandos in skin-tight sneaking suits, similar to the one Toga was wearing. It felt like slow motion as Izuku reacted, snapping two fingers in the squad´s direction. A safe amount of One for All was more than enough to send them crashing against the wall, breaking the bones of one or two.

Beside him, Toga was already moving, leaping into a somersault under one of the soldiers´ arc of fire and going for a disarm with knife and stick.

Izuku was not lagging behind, with a leap he was in their midst, and before they could switch their aim to his new position, he slammed his foot down, breaking the metal floor and sending all but two of the enemy unto the floor.

The closest one was in kicking distance, so he kicked through his rifle, smashing it in two, before bringing the leg down momentarily to propel himself into the air for a Tae Kwon Do flying kick Tenya had taught him, connecting square in the soldier´s chest, his armour breaking on impact and sending him crashing against the wall, breaking the white light panels.

He sidestepped and closed in on the second one, who ditched the rifle and put up his hands on a boxing stance. Izuku tried a simple kickboxing combination; a jab, a haymaker, an uppercut, grabbing the head and bringing it to his swinging knee, but the man was quick and strong, with some sort of resistance enhancement, as his skin turned purple where hit, but didn’t seem to cause damage.

The enemy was fast enough to get away from the uppercut and the knee, so he kept going with a spinning leg sweep. As the soldier leapt to evade, Izuku snapped a Delaware Air Force Smash at his head, knocking him out with the strength of a punch.

Toga had disarmed her opponent by cutting his arm in a few non-lethal places, then smacked his unprotected privates with her kali stick. As he squirmed, Toga smashed his head with a two-handed swing, sending teeth flying and the man falling down.

With some lightweight wire she carried around a weighted ball, she wrapped his hands and his feet together. He was out of the fight.

While Izuku turned to fight his third opponent, a man twice his height in a sneaking suit, Toga took the initiative against a female soldier in the process of standing up, cartwheeling into distance and kicking with both feet as she swung them down, her sound dampening boots connecting with the woman´s helmet and bringing her down.

Before the woman could turn over and fight from the ground, Toga got hold of her arm, twisting it hard at the wrist, her foot at the shoulder. A sickening snap accompanied the arm dislocating at the shoulder, and a loud crack as she twisted the wrist past its breaking point.

The female soldier would not be fighting with that arm, but she couldn't let the job unfinished, so Toga straddled her back and placed her arms around her neck. On another moment she might have giggled at the attack's name, a rear naked choke; at the moment, she just did what she had to do.

The woman squirmed and resisted, bringing her left arm up to try and claw at the choke, try and loosen Toga´s grip. It didn't work, and she soon stopped resisting. The female soldier went limp, and after kicking her to see if it wasn't faking, Toga moved on to the next enemy, a dazed commando on the ground, who only took a hit to the head to knock out.

Meanwhile, Izuku had used a Muay Thai flying knee against the tall commando, opening his guard for a short combination of punches to the head that left him out of commission.

It had been the third group of people sent against them in the maze, all around the same quality. It took every technique Izuku knew, analysing their Quirks at lightning speed, and fighting ruthlessly.

Izuku had blood on his gauntlets, and he didn't know for sure if some of the goons he had beaten were knocked down or if he had gone too far and really hurt them. The dead eyes some of them had broken his heart.

He knew what they had been through and he knew that they were victims. Victims hell bent on killing him and his girlfriend, but victims in the end.

Izuku took a second to rest and catch his breath, sitting down next to two knocked out guards. Toga slid down next to him, cuddling up to him.

"We keep going in a minute?" Toga nuzzled her nose against his cheek, her hair tickling his face.

"Yeah. We can go stab a fucker in a few, sure."

With a sigh, they got up after a minute, and started running again. They found a heavy steel door, they were in the right direction. Speakers on both sides of the door sparked to life, with a voice Izuku recognized from his nightmares.

Pestilentia.

"You two finally made it, good. I expected my children to at least last a bit longer. I´m surprised you didn't kill them, it would have been easier for you, it seems. Come on in, you two. I am waiting." The door opened with a metallic screech, showing a corridor that soon turned to the right.

A maze within a maze, at every turn there were more speakers. Pestilentia taunted them as they ran. First, he attacked Izuku

"Young Midoriya, look at you…a promising hero, on a government sanctioned assassination. Has that girl really gotten so far into your mind? You are not after me because I am a wanted villain…it is personal for you. And why even do all of this for the girl? She´s a murderer. On All for One´s behalf, for her own sake. You think you can change her?"

The villain laughed sardonically “You think you can save her, inside your head you feel you are the only one who can. You think as a hero you have the moral high ground, but deep inside you know you latched onto her because she depends on you completely. It is a power fantasy, Midoriya! Her feelings for you…if anyone else had given her the same kindness, it would have been the same, you are not special. You are nothing.”

The words bit hard. Izuku´s feelings for Toga were not like that, it wasn’t like that at all!

“You fucking liar! You think you can just talk your way into our heads?” said Toga “Izu-Izu is a hero, MY HERO, you fuck! He´s good and he´s kind and he would never do that to anyone!”

Izuku´s eyes crossed with Toga´s “Himiko, I…” but he was interrupted.

“And you, number 132798…I made you better than this. A woman who leaves behind everything her life has been for a man…do you think that is healthy? No, “Toga”, you are not in a healthy relationship with him. Just look at yourself…you have made him your accomplice, accessory to two murders. You have brought him into harms way; that Nomu biting his leg, while comedy gold for me, is all on you.

"All the nightmares I have cultivated in his mind with extreme care, all the times he has seen his loved ones die while he sleeps…that is all on you, Toga. You are toxic, everything around you dies. Your family, the League of Villains, those agents we dispatched on your little plane…and you know why you are like that? Why you will never be normal, why you will never have the happiness you want? Because…” Izuku covered Himiko´s ears with his gloved hands, looking into her eyes, trying to reassure her.

Toga was losing it, doubt in her face, anxiety and fear clouding her eyes as tears started to run down her cheeks. Izuku turned her head so she would meet his gaze, then released one of her ears so he could speak over Pestilentia´s monologue.

“He is wrong, I know you and I love you. We´ll be alright, Himiko. Just ignore him, let him waste his breath. He has no power over us while we are awake, and he´s going down."

The speakers replied after a short moment of silence “You were raised to be my successor, Toga. If you will not return to your real family, we will just have to break your mind again. You will be my heir, Toga, take the easy path.”

Izuku pulled Himiko in for a hug, whispering in her ear “He´s really pissing me off right now. Left camera?” Himiko whispered back

“Yeah, I got the right.” A second later, a throwing knife and a blast of concentrated wind blew up the speakers and cameras in the corridor.

“Fuck that bastard” said Toga, flipping off the air around her.

They kept running, shaken, but they had no doubts about each other. They knew what they felt, and no villain would be driving them apart. At last, they came upon another steel door, larger and thicker than the last. Izuku kicked a hole through it. On the other side were three smaller doors. Two slid open, revealing a man and a woman.

The man was well over two meters tall, a mountain of muscle, suited up in an armoured-up battle

dress uniform, black with dark red accents.

He was blond and blue eyed, his eyes displaying only a slight bit of anger. He had a helmet at his side, it looked a bit like a pitch-black fencing mask.

The woman was about Toga´s height and build and had dull green eyes and hair, pulled back into a bun. She looked like how Izuku would have described a “common” girl to look like. Her face seemed to shift under his gaze, seeming…unreal in a way.

The “common” girl was dressed in a sneaking suit, its black and blue colours contrasting with Toga ´s white and grey. Pestilentia had chosen some sort of mirror opponents, it seemed.

“Before I let my children begin, I will make you a final offer. Midoriya, you may leave unhindered if you swear to go and never oppose me again. “Toga”, return to our side, and reclaim your rightful place as my heir, my Left Hand. What say you? I´ll even let you keep young Midoriya for yourself, if you wish to.”

Izuku replied first “I refuse, we will stop you once and for all!”.

Toga was next “Fuck you, I'd rather die.”

“I hoped we could resolve this amicably, sadly it was always an option with little chance of success. Allow me to introduce your executioners, then. On my right side is 42, the pinnacle of selective breeding, enhancement and training. With his strength and skill, I feel confident he will be more than a match for your One for All, Midoriya."

The voice continued "On my left, 99, the finest student my academy ever produced. You were once before her, “Toga”, as the Alpha. She is your Omega, the last opponent you will ever meet. Bring me their heads, children.”

Izuku reacted just as the two enemies closed in, smashing the ground and snapping a finger at each, the gusts of wind affecting their balance slightly.

The assassin, 99, recovered with a pirouette and kept charging, a sword of some kind on one hand, a gun on the other, aiming towards Toga. But Toga had been faster, using the momentary interruption to throw a knife at her with deadly precision, slicing her left index finger, tearing away her nail and cutting a millimetre deep into her skin.

The super soldier, 42, charged like a bull, covering the distance in long strides aided by his enhancement Quirk, lagging a meter or two behind 99 due to Izuku´s first attack.

42 seemed to be moving in slow motion to Izuku; he intended to tackle him, to take the fight to the ground and pummel him quickly. With a step, a leap and a twist of the hips, Izuku met the super soldier´s head with a spinning flying kick, One for All powering his body at the threshold he could safely hold. 42 was thrown to the side, his helmet broken in pieces.

He rolled and started getting up; he was relentless. That kick would have smashed through half a meter of steel reinforced concrete; the guy barely had a bruise.

But before he could keep fighting, the assassin was on him, having bypassed Toga. 99 had holstered her submachinegun and swung her sword with both hands with extreme speed.

The sword looked like some kind of futuristic katana, and it hummed in a low tone. *It vibrates, to cut through materials!* It could cut through his armour, if it was what he thought it was. Mei would have gone crazy over a vibrating sword like that.

A slash finally connected, he was too slow to jump out the way. It was a shallow cut on his lower back, leaving his hero suit torn and wet with blood.

But it wasn't meant to kill him. Just distract him long enough to use her left hand and bring a grenade up to her mouth. She bit the pin and pulled it off with her mouth, before tossing it right at Toga´s feet as she moved in to fight.

Izuku knew what kind of grenade that was; a fragmentation grenade. The blast itself wasn't too big, but its shrapnel could injure severely at almost fifteen meters. 99 was a goddamn psycho!

He had a few seconds before the grenade exploded, some three if his head was counting correctly. His mind was going too fast, everything else was so slow. His own body was still slow...but fast enough.

Izuku managed to activate the skeletonized helmet and back armour with the buttons on his gloves. He crashed onto Toga, shielding her as much as he could with his body, and then dashed away, crashing through the wall panels that lined the room. As he crashed, the grenade exploded.

The concussive force didn't hit him with full force, as he was now in some semblance of cover, but the shrapnel managed to graze him. He felt a deep cut in his shoulder, some shrapnel barely touching his thigh, and some getting stuck in the armour plates he had activated.

In his arms, Toga was safe, but her ears were bleeding from the concussion. He tried to get up to keep fighting, but he was yanked by the back of the neck by the super soldier and tossed away before he could react.

As he flew, he saw that 42 had lost vision in an eye in the explosion, a piece of shrapnel embedded in it painfully.

He rolled to his feet, narrowly evading a cut from the back. The assassin was unscathed by the blast! Another cut split his helmet´s visor, a pull on the sword tearing the helmet apart.

She was very fast, agile and skilled. Her range was longer than Izuku´s, as she was armed, and he could use her gun on the same distance an Air Force Smash could be useful, and on the last one, she had simply danced aside. On longer distances, a grenade could further endanger Toga or take him by surprise.

But he had fought people with similar tactics before.

She moved like Toga, and he knew Toga very well. 99´s sword had a bit less reach than Stain´s katana, her other weapons no deadlier than the Mountain Brigade commandos he had fought on a falling plane.

She would dance around him, using her control over distance to stay safe, as any hit that landed could end the fight. She would try and use the sword to eliminate the biggest threats; his extremities.

If he could close the distance, he could disarm her and immobilize her, crush her bones with One for All if necessary. But how to do that? He had a plan.

Toga found herself whisked away from an explosion by Izu-Izu´s arms, then she saw that brutish

looking asshole grab him by the neck and throw him back to the central room.

The big guy turned to her, a glint of anger in his one healthy eye as he swung a fist to the ground, demolishing the area around the punch. Toga was gone already, jumping onto a side roll. She put away her kali stick and grabbed three throwing knives, already aiming at the weak spots in the armour with an eagle eye.

His face was open. The joint between bicep and forearm. A small section of the neck guard, torn by Izu-Izu´s attack. She threw, one after the other, all three knives. They found their mark.

The neck knife was deflected by his movement, leaving a deep gash and bleeding. The face knife bounced off, tearing off a chunk of his skin. *Thick-skulled bastard, that knife should have gone into his brain!* The arm knife connected just as the soldier drew his arm for a punch, making it weak and inaccurate.

Sidestepping the punch, she grabbed onto the knife embedded in the arm, slashing through everything she could, before he shouldered into her, pushing her back.

It was a reasonable reaction to getting your right arm paralyzed from the wrist down, and with a good chance of losing mobility forever if he didn't get medical attention immediately.

Taking two steps back, Toga took up both Kali sticks, against only one hand she might be able to control him and get to a good position.

As she expected, his first attack was a punch with the left fist, displacing the air similarly to Izuku ´s smashes, but with less power; it was a side effect, not the expected result.

Toga was not in the way for it, ducking under it to whack his fingers with a rising strike. She saw his middle finger break as she continued with a combination, using the second stick downwards, slamming the wrist, then the forearm, then a quick strike to the neck.

On an unarmoured opponent, it would have crushed their windpipe. On 42, she hit on the spot her knife had slashed, further damaging his neck, but without bringing him down.

Toga was too close and could already tell he had the advantage now. She could only slip past to safety if she fought dirty, and she had been fighting dirty for seven years; she slammed both batons on his face, one in each eye.

The healthy eye seemed to take the strike, the blind one had the shrapnel pushed in deeper. He bellowed in anger as he tried to grab Toga, to crush her, but he had an arm he could scarcely lift, and he could not close in around her quick enough.

Toga leapt backwards, and she saw him blink with his right eye, focusing on her. He tore a pouch from his armour, taking out a bandage, and he tied it around his right arm. He kept eye contact with Toga as he did so. He wrapped the bandage tightly, he couldn't make a full fist, but he could move the arm now. The bandage was getting filled with blood at just the rate Toga wanted. *For a super soldier he is ridiculously predictable.*

It was a matter of ripping the bandage off now.

Toga switched to her knives, a Fairbairn Sykes dagger on her left hand, a WWI trench knife on the right. And she had just what she needed to get him even more predictable; trash talk.

"You´re too slow! Your boss said you´re enhanced, does that mean you do steroids? Steroids make your balls little, you know? Or did your parts have such a tiny original size it didn't matter to you?"

She laughed at him as she charged. A vein bulged in his forehead; it had worked a bit. Normally she could get people yelling at her with that kind of talk.

His punches were faster and harder to evade, but she kept laughing and insulting him. “Can't catch me, Tiny Dick?” she said as she stabbed at his fingers, just out of his reach.

“I would say that you´re nowhere near a match for my beloved Izu-Izu but come on! I'm like three times smaller and I´m beating you!”

It wasn’t true, she was getting overwhelmed. If he didn’t overswing or make a mistake, he would get close enough to punch a hole through her gut.

“What is it? Wee eugenics baby can´t get a punch on this traitor to your cause? Oh yes, I'm a hero now! And you know what heroes can do?” Toga was risking it with this move, it was a deadly gambit.

She stepped inside his guard as he punched with the injured, but still super powered, right hand, tearing the bandage, licking the blood and transforming as he moved his left arm into a choke.

Except the arm was now at shoulder height, not face height, and the person inside his grasp was a big man.

A copy of himself, down to the injured eye and arm. A copy of himself, with the hips positioned to take him down, with an arm pulling on his own.

42 flew for a second, before landing heavily on the ground. His copy was trying to escape, so 42 got up, his back acting up slightly; the fall must have damaged his spine.

Toga moved as far away as she could; if she brought this brute back to the room Izuku was in, they could finish him off together, weakened as he was.

She reached the glass panels separating the main room and the side spaces, covered in concrete and dirt, just before being tackled through, rolling with 42 towards the centre of the room.

The brute tried punching with his left hand, but by the time his hand hit she was a foot and a half shorter, and already slipping underneath him.

A second attack seemed to be ready to take her head off, and then she heard those words… “Detroit SMASH!” and the super soldier flew back half a dozen meters.

He looked down to give her a hand up, saying “Himiko, are you…” as Toga instead kicked up with a capoeira move, kicking up 99´s hand and altering her sword´s trajectory from Izuku´s head.

“Go get him, she´s mine” she told Izuku, as she got in her fighting stance, kali sticks up, between 99 and Izuku. Izuku probably nodded, as he rushed away, but Toga was focused on her foe.

In front of her was an average young woman. *Ridiculously* average. Brown hair tied up in a bun, dull brown fish eyes, devoid of all emotion. Simple, cheap makeup.

It was a ruse. All of it. Underneath that mask, there was a different person. 99 wasn’t some sort of Uraraka-ish grey man.

Toga could see through her lies; an ugly nose, broken in so many fights, a scar on her right cheek, fiery red hair, icy blue eyes. Blue eyes with no mercy, no feeling but bloodlust.

“You were the best of us, 98!” she said, her passionate tone clashing with her dead eyes. “You were better than ME! And you throw that away? You selfish child!”

99 shot a burst with her submachine gun, aiming to cut her in half. Toga dropped to the ground, rolled back to her feet and zig zagged towards 99.

A burst that long had to have drained most of her magazine; if she used the rest, she would need both hands to reload, or at least to lower her gun arm, another small opening she could use.

“So, this is about who´s best?” she said as she feinted left before going right, evading a short burst of bullets like that.

“It is not even the real you! They made you weak!” said 99, as she fired her last burst, one of the bullets grazing Toga in the collarbone.

She lowered her gun to reload, a fresh magazine strapped to her drop-leg holster. *Drop-leg´s are unstable as fuck, sister! It´ll give you some trouble!*

The holster moved as the submachinegun snagged the magazine top, giving Toga the second she needed before the gun was brought up again.

“Would a weak bitch do this?!” With surgical precision, she smacked the bones on 99´s wrist with the left stick, crashing the right stick on her thumb. Both bones broke, and Toga had a small opening to clock her in the jaw with a backhand strike with her left weapon as she leapt away.

The sword swung methodically, instead of the wild slashes Toga had expected from an opponent with a broken wrist and thumb.

From using the sword with both hands, as early in the fight, using a Japanese style, she was now using cuts that made Toga think of Polish sabre techniques. A cut managed to clip one of Toga´s sticks, shaving an inch off its length. *Fucking sword cut through the polymer!*

The sword needed to go.

“What are you, sister, a pirate?” asked Toga, trying to rile her up.

“Do not call me sister, traitor!”

Another near miss, Toga was feeling her luck running lower every swing. If she could make a distraction…

“Wanna know why I did it? Put down the sword and I´ll tell you everything” said Toga, in false honesty. 99 lowered her sword ever so slightly from a hanging guard above her head. She seemed more curious than anything.

And with a curious face she saw Toga throw her right-hand stick at her face.

As 99 moved her arm to defend against the thrown weapon, Toga reached behind to her belt, reaching for a weighted polymer ball on a rope, aiming at the right hand of her opponent. Her throw was so fast 99 had no time to react from her defence, finding her right hand entangled and yanked hard, she lost her balance, stepping twice as she was pulled.

Right into Toga´s reach. *Got her just like Uraraka!*

As she got hold of her wrist with her right hand, she attacked her opponent´s back, hitting two

times, fast and hard, at the kidney area. Then using her cable and the stick, she pulled back 99´s arm and forced her to drop the sword…

…only to be elbowed, hard, by her other arm. *Moving like that surely dislocated the arm I was holding?*

99´s right shoulder sagged slightly, but she attacked relentlessly, getting inside Toga´s guard and punching her in the face and the stomach, taking all air from her lungs.

In pain, Toga had dropped her kali stick, and with the opportunity 99 had drawn out her own knife, a large Ka-Bar knife.

It was a knife fight now.

Remembering the horrible Spanish dub of an anime she had once seen, Toga fell in the flow of the knife fight. *Será duelo a muerte con cuchillos…duelo a muerte…con cuchillos? No se que será eso…* She laughed, remembering that.

A smile in her face, a knife in her hand, the blood dance of blades…cut by cut, Toga checked every strike, and all her attacks were checked as well. It was like sparring with a friend…a very fast friend, with a very sharp knife.

The fight sped up. Strike upwards, downwards, diagonal caught, backhand, punch, evasion, checking a strike, moving away from a thrust…they were going down a path of no return.

Toga knew that at this point it was to kill or be killed, and she had too much to live for to die to some girl with a number for a name. She still had to shank that bastard Pestilentia, meet that brother and uncle she supposedly still had, maybe grandparents?

And she still had too many things she wanted to do with her Izu-Izu.

The first cut felt like a whip, sending a flare of pain up her arm. The Ka-Bar had cut through the synthetic leather of her sneaking suit. *That´ll be a new scar for sure.* But she gave as much as she took, and slashed 99 in the leg, a deep cut in her left leg.

A second cut hit her right bicep, and she winced. A shallow thrust scarred her opponent´s cheek, the return motion opening her mouth into a Glasgow smile.

A quick stab to her leg made her balance suffer, a crimson flower bloomed on 99´s shoulder, staining her black sneaking suit red. Toga saw 99 shift her right foot slightly, her muscle memory reacting to a move her mind did not remember ever countering.

99 attacked diagonally, downward from over her head, lightning fast. On Toga´s right hand, she switched to an ice pick grip on instinct, as her left hand rose up to catch her wrist, her body moving ahead to the intercept.

On the last instant, 99 twisted her blade, sinking it into Toga´s hand. It was like fire burning her hand, her entire arm.

But her counterattack had been deadly. She had stabbed 99 in the throat, the force of her attack bringing the assassin down to the floor.

As 99 died beneath her, she looked dead into Toga´s eyes. Between bloody gurgles, she managed to whisper "…Strong. You are stronger. Still one of us. Still a monster. Still a servant."

She had even smiled in the end. Toga looked at her hands; her light grey gloves were covered in blood, her left hand even bloodier. Her left hand seemed to be cramped into a fist…she turned her wrist around, seeing more blood, fresh blood.

Her hand was bleeding…her fingers…her pinkie and ring finger were chopped off, replaced by bleeding stumps.

The pain and the sight made her queasy, she felt she wanted to puke.

She took a deep breath. *Come on now…I´ve been cut and stabbed and all before. It's just two fingers, not the end of the world. Just get a bandage or something…Izu-Izu should know what to do. He´s a goddamn genius.*

After making sure Toga was alright, Deku leapt into action, boot first into his foe. 42, already up, tried to catch it with his right hand on instinct. *Right handed.*

The kick smashed through the weak defence, *Himiko's work,* but he was caught by the leg and pulled to the ground. The super soldier loomed over him, pushing his broken, limp arm against his chest to try and keep him down while he attacked with his left hand.

Deku wasn't about to let that happen and started punching, hard and fast against his chest, breaking his armour by stressing the ceramic plates till breaking point.

Twenty punches before his enemy could even deliver a single punch, Deku brought up his knee with 80% of One for All. It would strain his muscles and give him horrible cramps for a week, but it would not break his bones, so it was enough.

And it was enough to break 42´s armour around his most valuable possessions. *Kouta would have been proud!*

That was enough to get the super soldier off him. Deku kicked away with both legs, snapping air blasts for good measure. He got back up, the shrapnel and the cut from the vibro sword flaring in pain.

He took a fighting stance, seeing his enemy get back up. A knee in that spot would have probably caused enough internal bleeding to kill a normal human, apart from obviously obliterating their privates.

This man was obviously insane.

An insane man that punched hard and fast, felt Deku as he had fallen for a feint and caught a haymaker to the side of the face, swelling his cheek and his eyelids. It was remarkably similar to fighting All Might in that final exam…perhaps twice as hard, though.

The enemy started using his legs as well, meeting Deku´s kicks with his own, shattering both their knee pads when both knee strikes collided.

But he wasn't creative with his Quirk, too focused on his conventional fighting techniques, so Deku used the advantage, slamming the ground at an angle to propel the concrete floor against 42´s feet, then using the most power he could safely muster on a flying kick.

His kick connected, snapping the super soldier´s head back with a snap, but 42 had kicked as well, slamming his shin into Deku´s ribs even as he fell.

Deku could feel his ribs shatter, the air being punched out of his lungs. As he caught his breath, carefully for his ribs, he saw 42 start to squirm.

He needed to knock him out for good. As 42 got to one knee to try and wobble back to his feet, Izuku clotheslined him with a flying scissor choke, passed 42's working left arm around, and locked his legs around 42´s neck.

He choked him to submission and handcuffed him with a pair of Hatsume Industries™ handcuffs, on both hands and feet. The magnetic cuffs attracted each other, effectively hog tying the man.

Izuku ran to help Toga. “Himiko!” he yelled as he saw her clutching her hand in shock, dripping drops of blood onto the corpse of the woman she had fought.

An instant later Izuku was disinfecting the wound as gently as possible and bandaging the cut fingers. The bandages would sterilize the wound until she could receive proper medical attention.

Together, they slammed open the central metal door. A sleek, futuristic office inhabited by a man with red eyes. Pestilentia.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading, all feedback is greatly appreciated!

Whatever is everyone else doing?

Chapter Notes

> The rest of the heroes face foes of differing quality...
>
> Tunes recommended are "Rules of Nature" from Metal Gear Rising; Revengeance for the first fight, Initial D for Iida's fight, and for the last one "Final Agni Kai" from Avatar the Last Airbender

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Get down, get down!” yelled Tenya as he tried to shield Ochako from the tidal wave coming their way, called up to the platform by the enemy leader, a long-haired man in a bespoke charcoal suit called Niven.

His Quirk had been unknown, and now he could see it was a very strong hydrokinesis, water control.

The tsunami crashed into the oil rig, washing over a few knocked out goons into the sea, dragging debris between the team.

The operation had gone well at first, disabling the anti-air defences had been easy with Hatsume´s gadgets, the first wave of enemies they had encountered had been little more than militia with weak Quirks and guns, no match for pro heroes.

But on as they reached the central platform, where the enemy missile battery was, and started to disable it, they had been attacked by a small team of strong villains.

One was some sort of ninja in a cybernetic suit, another was a man with the features of a shark. The last one had been the leader, Niven.

And now they were here, the sea below the oilrig a stormy mess as Niven moved around millions of litres of water to attack them, displacing it around the rig, creating a huge maelstrom around them.

And now, with a tsunami, he had split them up, and his other men stepped in to fight in more even odds.

The water moved, turning into a wall rising three or four meters. Niven slammed the wave against Todoroki, Tsuyu and Tokoyami, splitting them from Tenya and Ochako, and Hatsume and Yaoyorozu were already fighting the shark man.

As the water hit their friends, the cyborg ninja rushed at them with a glowing katana, a downwards cut that hit the ground between them, cutting the metal. “You know who I am? You know why we do this?” asked the ninja between cuts they narrowly evaded.

“No and we don’t really care!” said Ochako, aiming her lightweight javelin at the enemy and throwing it with deadly speed.

“I´m neither enemy nor friend, I´m back from a world where such words are meaningless. I've

removed all obstacles, now you and I will battle to the death!" said the ninja.

"Was a that a reference or something?" asked Tenya, leaping over a cut to his legs. He had taken a good deal of time in making his armour much sturdier against blades after fighting Stain, but that katana looked like it could cut through anything.

He looked over to Ochako and said, "Formation B!"; they would attack from both sides so the enemy could not fight both at once. A single touch of Ochako´s hands would put him out of combat, a Recipro Burst kick would knock anyone out.

Tenya took the right, Ochako the left, striking with a javelin flying low and a roundhouse kick to the head. The ninja twisted his body as he leapt, evading the blows, but in instants they were on him again.

Tenya aimed a flying kick at his chest, his engines increasing his speed bit by bit as he turned into a rotating downward kick as he landed; Ochako stabbed with her javelin to shorten the distance between herself and the enemy.

The ninja was extremely fast and agile, evading their every move and counterattacking with dexterity, but Tenya was picking speed and Ochako was getting very close.

As they pushed him towards an empty helicopter pad, the ninja looked around and changed his sword guard, trying to keep the blade between them, but Ochako was on him and she touched the katana´s hilt.

She smiled as she brought her finger tips together and the sword started floating. She had strengthened her Quirk to lift objects away from the Earth´s gravity at will, so it would send the ninja flying unless he let go.

The ninja let the sword go, just in time to catch a foot in his stomach.

As he recoiled, shuriken appeared in his hand, and he threw them at Ochako, pinning her to a nearby wall. But he was finished, Ingenium had him against the ropes! Speakers on his helmet started blasting "Running in the 90´s" as he yelled "Recipro Burst!", kicking fast and hard, driving the ninja to the edge of the platform.

A kick smashed open the ninja´s helmet, but it didn't seem to affect him until he was a meter away from falling. Then he smiled.

Ingenium´s last kick, a leaping push kick, was caught by a kick from the ninja, who started laughing. "My Quirk, No Fall Damage, allows me to fall from any height without hurting myself or dying! Unless I fall on my side or head, I´m unstoppable! And it translates to damage absorption on my legs!"

Tenya thought that would be a convenient, strong Quirk for a hero, and as they exchanged kicks, he asked "Why be a villain? Surrender and the law will treat you rightly!"

"The lawsuits from people I fell on by accident led me to crime, and I love it! Falling into action! Heists, money, women!"

"There are rules against jumping on people for reasons! And turning to crime is never a good decision, so we will arrest you! And you know what? Taking down a petty criminal gives me Déjà vu! Recipro Burst, Nitro!"

His legs were flashes of light striking the ninja as more Initial D blasted from the speakers,

pummelling him to submission. On the ground, he tied up the villain with Hatsume´s special cuffs, and left him there to go help Ochako.

“Ochako! Are you alright?”

“Yeah, these shuriken seem magnetic though”

When she was free, they hugged “That move against his katana was awesome Ochako! Is it still floating?”

“I think it is somewhere in the clouds…that Recipro Nitro is so cool! Is it new?”

“Yeah, I developed it with Tensei!”

They held hands for a short while, until a crash of waves caught their attention. Their friends needed them!

Freya turned her shield over, looking at all the new scuff marks and where the wood was starting to splinter. “Oooh, a bullet hole…”

Room by room she had cleared the upper and ground floor of the school, encountering two kinds of enemies; stealthy assassin types, and bulky, strong tank types.

For all their strength and training, they were little match to the two, agent and hero. She wasn’t the number one hero in Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland for her good looks, after all, she was mighty!

From the moment she had burst into the building through the hole in the roof, her music bellowing over the explosions and gunshots, she had moved like a juggernaut of pain, her axe carving a path through the enemy, trying to be as non-lethal as possible, though many would need to die on self-defence alone.

It was war, after all! Mere seconds later, Holy Diver had joined in, firing short bursts into the enemy soldiers´ centre mass. She was deadly!

Using equal parts Freya´s shield to bash in the doors as Anna´s breaching charges, they moved room by room, neutralising all the hostiles. Only a few rooms remained, main of all Pestilentia´s office.

“Ready to move, girl?” asked Anna.

“Yah, lets do this!” They placed a breaching charge on the heavy oak doors and stood on both sides of it.

“3…2…1, go.” With a click, the charge´s trigger was fired.

Freya felt adrenalin spike in her brain as she rushed in through the blown-out door, taking the right side as her area of attack. Beside her, Holy Diver was taking accurate shots, one at each merc.

A merc with a light machine gun raised his weapon at her, oh so slowly, just as Freya threw her axe at him. The axe was faster than the gun, splashing blood around the room. Next, she slammed shield first into a militia, sending him crashing against a wall. Grabbing her shield by the rim, she

threw it at a third man, smacking his forehead and knocking him out.

One man left standing, she vaulted over a beautiful desk to avoid a stream of bullets, grabbed a heavy book from a cabinet, and tossed it at the merc, a loud crack followed the man dropping to the ground.

As she went to retrieve her weapons (shield first) another man entered the room, wearing the armour the “super soldiers” wore, though his build was slighter than the hulking brutes they had already defeated.

“Who dares defile The Lord´s chambers? None shall step foot here and live to tell the tale while 113477 breathes!” bellowed the man from behind a blank white mask, which contrasted with his black armour.

“Shut the fuck up” said Holy Diver, shooting with her battle rifle directly at White Mask´s head. But in an instant, he was a meter away, then a meter closer to them, teleporting a meter at a time!

“Bastard can flash step, Freya, watch out!” managed to say Anna before the White Mask was upon her, striking with a metal quarterstaff. The blow was fast and powerful, but she blocked it easily.

Then he was behind her, then beside, then a meter away, attacking from a different angle each time “Impressive…no one has ever blocked two of my attacks together, let alone four…can you keep this up?”

He was everywhere at once, moving every second. Freya was fast, almost inhumanly fast, but this was faster. Her counterattacks were too slow to be effective, White Mask just flash stepped away before a punch could connect, though she managed to graze him several times. She retreated, he would not be wise to teleport to her exact place unless he wanted to screw up with physics even more…

Freya started to lose ground. Her shield was starting to break at the constant onslaught, and the staff had managed to hit her a couple of times in her armour, strong enough to leave a bruise for tomorrow, she thought. “Freya, I have a plan, but you have to trust me!”

“Anna, of course I trust you! We are pretty much girlfriends!”

She was sure the operator was probably blushing behind her helmet, but she had more pressing concerns, like White Mask knocking her helm off with an upward diagonal strike, followed up by a lateral strike that split her shield in two.

“Freya, do a roll, 2 o´clock!”

She rolled, directly evading a sweeping strike, and she heard a shot, ringing much louder now that she had no helmet on. As she got to her feet and turned around, she saw White Mask collapse to the ground, slowly, as his helmet´s plain white visor cracked and turned crimson.

As he fell to the ground, Holy Diver shot him five times more, centre mass “Just to be sure” she said, shrugging.

“All good?”

“Yah, pity about that shield, it was strong Norwegian wood!”

Taking her helmet off, Anna smiled a content smirk “So pretty much girlfriends, huh? Wanna make it official?”

“Yes, when we leave this creepy school. Those brainwash rooms give me goose bumps, poor Toga!”

“Good thing we´re torching it to the fucking ground then, babe.”

“We should call it in.”

“Yeah, good idea” clicking her push-to-talk button for her radio headset, Anna told the rest of their allies “This is Holy Diver, the upper building is secure, we have retrieved evidence from X-Ray´s office. Holding for confirmation the lower building has been cleared, over.”

“This is Air Wing, skies are ours.”

“Armour here, we are pushing through.”

“Infantry moving to secure upper town, reactor and lower town are ours.”

Anna looked extremely proud of her operation “Great work, everyone. Keep it up, we have them on the ropes.”

Mei Hatsume really should have stayed on the helicopter. She was sure she could pilot a helicopter well enough to escape a tsunami…maybe.

She was glad she had some gear on at least; her thrusters, exoskeleton, vambrace, helmet and an armour vest that covered her chest, *no more broken ribs!*

But fighting a goddamn Street Shark? This wasn’t on her contract, at least not when she wasn’t fuelled by adrenalin and mixed feelings for Izuku Midoriya. A shark guy!

“I´ll kill you and give your bodies as tribute to the Deep Ones!” A shark guy referencing tales of eldritch horror!

“Momo, what´s the plan?” Her friend fired a freshly crafted harpoon at the Street Shark, slowing him down slightly, then she said,

“You need to distract him, I´ll spring a trap!”

A plan that involved running her mouth to trash talk a Street Shark while she zoomed around with her gear? A worthy task for Mei Hatsume, CEO!

“Hey, you! Why do you look like a children´s cartoon from the nineties? How can you expect us to take you seriously when you are wearing khakis?”

The enemy didn’t answer, he just roared and started chasing her around the platform. Mei zoomed just far enough from his reach, still speaking “The Biker Mice were cooler than the Street Sharks, mate! And don’t your khakis get all wrinkled in water? They are not proper attire for a sharkman!”

“Stop talking about my trousers! I´ll tear you apart!” Maybe he wanted to tear Mei apart, but for some reason, he instead delivered a punch to her abdomen when he managed to catch up, sending her a few feet away, almost falling to the floor.

“I´ll bite you to death!” he yelled as he ran to her, but Mei was unharmed with her new armour, and

had flown a few meters away with a burst from her thrusters before running towards Momo. She had bought her friend almost three minutes with this chase, so that tall girl better be ready.

Dashing with the Street Shark just behind, Mei made it to an “x” marked on the floor, sliding over it and blasting behind a few crates for safety. The moment the shark man made it to the spot, a metal cage fell on him, before constricting.

“The Baby number 302! The coil prison!” she yelled as Momo sprung the trap and folded it around the Street Shark, catching him in a tight cylindrical prison. Then the entire cage was engulfed by electricity, and the shark was tazed unconscious.

“That finish was quite shocking, Yaomomo.” Mei quipped as they performed the “engineer´s salute” they had invented, a secret greeting they only shared with fellow tech enthusiast Izuku.

“Let´s leave that 90´s cartoon there and go help the others!”

Shouto almost felt his arm rip off as Momo was washed away from his hand by the enemy leader´s power, a ridiculously strong control over water. Niven, the enemy leader, had split them apart, hoping his underlings could take care of his friends, but they looked to be on the weaker side.

Niven himself seemed powerful, by far the strongest person with a water quirk he had encountered. Some heroes, like Manual and the deceased Water Hose duo, Kouta-kun´s parents, had a similar hydrokinesis Quirk.

Shouto did not remember if the Water Hose duo could produce water from their bodies, like Shouto could with fire and ice, but Manual could only manipulate existing water.

Niven could move a hundred times more water with his Quirk than Manual, lashing the oil rig with tidal waves, forcing his friends and their foes to fight in the other two platforms to the sides. In the centre, the support struts were shaking from the attacks, and the waves on deck had swept Tokoyami to the edge of the platform, holding on only through Dark Shadow´s claws.

The water was too much for Shouto to freeze completely; Niven only bent some more water over the ice to whip at Shouto and take him to the ground.

Fire proved less than effective as well, as his attempts at evaporating an incoming attack were halted, his left side soaked through. The water was freezing, so using his ice Quirk was even more dangerous than usual.

Momo´s strategy had taken into account a variety of Quirks for the terrorists, but they had not thought to encounter a man strengthened by the battlefield being in the middle of the ocean.

“Tsuyu! You are our best hope for defeating him!” As an amphibian hero, Tsuyu could weather the water much better than him or Tokoyami, who was held back by a constant barrage of waves.

With a determined face, she replied, “I´m on it, kero.”

Shouto had to make an opportunity for Tsuyu to get close and kick the guy in the face, so he would use as much of his power as he could to make himself the target. A Flashfire Fist would thaw him out before frostbite set, wouldn’t it?

Focusing, Shouto pushed his hand forward as another wave was pulled from the ocean to hit him. The moment his hand touched the first drop of water he started freezing, pushing his body to the limit, his right side readying a super nova of flame to counteract the ice.

The iceberg he had made was dozens of meters wide, a few times taller than it was wide, a chaotic array of icicles and icy stalagmites. And drawing back his fist, he punched with all the power of his fire “Flashfire Fist: SUPER NOVA!”, the white-hot ball of flame punching through the ice and evaporating instantly the wall of water Niven had called around himself.

He had survived unharmed, but he looked quite dried up in Shouto´s eyes…in a radius of three meters all moisture had been dried up.

Niven kept fighting, though. As Shouto fell to one knee, exhausted at using his powers to that extent, he saw the wave Niven was calling next; it would engulf the entire oilrig and definitely crush the supports. It would kill them all…

And then from the iceberg Shouto had created jumped the Rainy Day Hero, Froppy, her big feet connecting with Niven´s face in a brutal dropkick.

Niven collapsed, knocked out and maybe even dead from the hit, Shouto couldn’t tell, and as he fell, his control over the wave dissipated, sending the water in every direction, creating smaller fierce waves all around them.

“Looks like I won the battle, kero. Fumikage-chan, does salt water affect your feathers?”

A drenched, completely dejected Tokoyami replied “It is hair but...please take me away from this dreary place, Tsuyu-chan, my existence here is most horrible.” Seconds later, their friends joined them. They had overcome their foes as well.

“This is Yaoyorozu, the oil rig operation was a success, the only casualties were ten enemy mercenaries, who fell down to the sea below, killed by the drop. All threats neutralized, mission accomplished.”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading as always!

End of the Line

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Pestilentia was there, sitting behind a glass desk, on a goddamn office chair. Toga took a second to look at the super villain, then sent a throwing knife directly at his face.

Her right hand was intact, and her throwing technique was superb…why didn't she hear him yell "Ow, my eye!" or "The pain! I´ve been killed!" She saw her knife stay in place about three meters away from Pestilentia before falling to the ground.

"You obviously didn't believe I wouldn't have another card or two under my sleeve, did you?" he pointed to an unconscious middle-aged woman sitting on another chair at the edge of the desk. "My little sister, though a mere civilian, she knows the value of family. We Krasnovs have Quirks activated by our own sleep…my dear Svetlana has a strong self-defence Quirk; when a person is most vulnerable, she is mighty. A bubble shield of kinetic energy, with a radius of three and a half meters, and an outer thickness of a further five meters…You are in, young ones. And the barrier is extremely good for conducting electricity!"

A small crackle sounded before lightning filled the air, criss-crossing and catching Toga and Izuku with uncountable volts of electricity. It wasn't enough to knock them out, just to knock them down to the ground, beaten.

"You motherfucker" rasped Toga, her throat dry and her body aching, in particular her severed fingers. It was like a flame was touching the stumps of her cut digits, but she could swear she had *felt them* when the electricity was used.

Izuku was already trying to get up, pushing the ground with his fist. Of course, a tazer that could knock down Toga wouldn't be enough for Izu-Izu!

"I would advise against getting up, young Midoriya. "Toga", it grieves me enormously but I´m going to have to call up our failsafe." Taking a deep breath, the red eyed man started speaking again, every word increasing the dread in Toga´s mind. She knew this combination of words "Blood Eagle. Onion. Allegiance. Heir…"

NONONONONO, NOT THESE WORDS, NO!

"…Island. Storm. Throne. Ninety-Eight. Activate."

"…Ninety-Eight. Activate." When Pestilentia said the last word, Toga started screaming, her eyes rolling back into her head, her limbs flailing all around her, hitting the floor every time. Her left hand was bleeding again by the impact.

It was just like Nejire had described Shigaraki had reacted after interacting with All for One in Tartarus before the supervillain escaped.

"Himiko! HIMIKO!" yelled Izuku as he crawled towards her. He could prevent her from hurting herself, hold her until the seizure was over…

“The after-effects of one of All for One´s Quirks and my own brainwashing, he insisted we give 98 a more “malleable” persona for his League of Villains…with a few correct words anyone can activate the agent, make them fulfil a mission, bring out their hidden identity…Right now she´s fighting inside her own mind. 98 will kill this “Toga” and return to us. Without even having to use my Quirk on her, isn’t that neat?”

“I…I will take you down, villain!” yelled Izuku, fighting through the pain as he reached Toga, holding her so she wouldn’t thrash around. She was still screaming. The sound broke Izuku´s heart. “Fight, Himiko! Win, you have to win!” he said in her ear.

“I really don’t have enough time to monologue out here, Midoriya, so I´ll just take over your mind now, agreed?”

The villain stood up, looking down on him, and withdrew a syringe. That liquid…it was Trigger! Pestilentia injected himself in the neck, cursing in Russian at the pain of the shot, and looked directly into Izuku´s eyes.

The red eyes were completely red. Blood red sclera, dark red irides…even the pupils were a dark crimson. As red eyes faced green eyes, Izuku felt himself being forcefully torn from consciousness into a dream.

The dreamscape was barren; a ruined temple of some sort, perhaps a cathedral or a Parthenon…the walls were too crumbled to really tell. A slate grey sky, covered in a symmetrical array of clouds, dominated the vision.

A figure made of shadows and darkness materialised in front of him, its eyes fire and blood. A whip of flame and a sword of darkness emerged in his hands, and he spread misty wings behind him. With a roar he was upon Izuku, striking with the sword, a scimitar of gigantic size and razor-sharp edge.

Deku was fast and agile, and evaded the blow, jumped over the flaming whip as the demon tried to coil it around his leg, rolled to evade a swipe from the sword.

In instants he had a plan to fight the creature; the demon didn’t appear to be using the wings to fly or aid in jumping, but they seemed to catch some wind as he moved around, the whip would connect them, hurting him, but connecting them nonetheless…if he was caught he would have to be fast or the sword would cut him in half.

Deku readied his right hand, took a telegraphed step towards the right, and, as the whip snapped around to catch him, he moved in to be caught at the abdomen. The flames coiled around him, causing him blinding pain, but not enough to make him miss.

“Delaware Air Force SMASH!” the gust of wind knocked the demon´s balance off just when he started to pull Deku towards him, and the hero was given a golden chance to capitalize on the mistake. Deku grabbed the flaming whip and pulled, bringing the demon right up to him.

Lightning-fast, he grabbed the creature´s wrist and, using 100% of One for All, *I already died in your nightmares, I am not going to hurt myself just doing this,* he closed his fist. The demon´s whole hand came off, and it bellowed in pain like a wild animal.

The moment his hand was cut off, it started to make a replacement out of the changing substance it seemed to be made of, but Deku was not about to give it any chances. Moving from the arm to its

face, Deku punched him as fast as humanly possible, the full power of One for All behind every punch.

With the last punch he broke beyond the limits, just like he had needed to when facing Muscular "SMASH!" he yelled, his arm going right through the thing´s skull.

I guess I never used this much power against you before, did I? "Is this all? Face me, Pestilentia! Come and fight like a man!" *This has to work, Shinsou…*

Two creatures formed out of the mist, each one with a dozen arms. Again, formed out of a black substance, at times fog, at times petroleum, at times the void of space, and with burning red eyes. *Pestilentia´s avatars.*

Deku fought against wave after wave of enemies sent by Pestilentia, and the villain started using the dreamscape against him as well. Earthquakes, tornado winds, lightning…Deku was fighting through it all, putting down demons and monsters.

"You can not defeat me, Pestilentia!" he yelled. And then the dream collapsed.

Izuku was falling, the ground removed from existence. He felt the artificial feeling of fear, of dread for the fall…Pestilentia was trying again to get inside his brain, even deeper than before. He fell.

"I am trying to make the world a better place Midoriya. The world, its people, their minds broken and moulded by my hands, mankind reborn as my servants…Lovely thought, wouldn't you agree? Under my enlightened rule, mankind would conquer the stars, reach new horizons…but for that I need to have complete control, and five billion and a few hundred people are simply too many. I had to become the Pestilence to humanity, young Midoriya, so I can rebuild the small remaining pieces to something actually useful. A single nation, under an eternal emperor!"

Didn't he say Himiko would be his heir? "Eternal? How would you ever achieve that?" *If I play his game he will reveal his cards…*

"That is a little secret I will only tell you if you surrender, young one."

"Alright. Tell me how you aim to become immortal." Izuku was torn from the fall and brought to a dry grassland.

Pestilentia was in front of him, and he spoke "All for One found a Quirk that could, in theory, transfer a person´s conscience to a new body…The Quirk was found in China, days before All for One´s escape. Shigaraki…that useless kid, he once met my underling, Nazzaro, and we slipped in some of my cells. I gave him a few nightmares, nothing serious, just to keep tabs on him. When we secured the transfer Quirk, Shigaraki had his jailbreak idea, just in time, I didn't even need to prod him. "

Izuku was stunned. A Quirk like that could bring chaos to society, or if the technology for cloning were invented, could allow the terminally ill a new chance…

"The Quirk is on a baby, called Xinsheng by her mother, now, she is Number 0. She is one of my safeguards, the other is the Pestilence, a virus harvested from the corpses of all my failed children. If I´m right, it´ll kill millions, whether you stop me or not. And you could never live with yourself if a baby died because of your actions, would you?" Pestilentia smiled. The fucker smiled.

Pestilentia thought he had won. *Good.* Izuku summoned One for All in its purest state inside his brain, the energy swarming every cell inside. In a second every previous wielder of One for All was beside him, All Might to his right side, Nana Shimura to his left. Faster than the blink of an

eye they were upon Pestilentia, the previous wielders holding him down.

“What is this…One for All is not supposed to work like that, All for One said…he said!” Pestilentia screamed as the holders of the Quirk immobilised him. The original One for All took Izuku´s hand and placed it on Pestilentia´s forehead.

Light seemed to emit from Izuku´s hand, brighter every instant, while Pestilentia yelled in agony.

“I am destroying every one of your cells inside my brain and using the connection to your brain to end you. You are done, Pestilentia! This is for Himiko, villain!”

The light glowed blindingly, and Izuku heard a slashing sound.

Izuku felt himself falling down on the floor, slamming his face against the metal panels. Inside the forcefield, Pestilentia collapsed, holding his head in his hands. On his radio he could hear Freya anxiously yelling “There´s a baby in the upper office, we need medical attention, now! She is ill, hurry!”

Beside Izuku, Himiko had stopped moving.

Himiko Toga had fought herself in several nightmares. Pestilentia seemed to have some creepy enjoyment of having her kill her counterpart, a bit creepier when her other self was dressed in her schoolgirl uniform and sweater she had worn with the League.

But this was different. The Toga before her had dead eyes, no expression in her face at all. The other Toga wore a palette swap of the sexy, stylish sneaking suit the Agency guys had given her. And most angering of all she didn’t even cut her hair with bangs.

It wasn’t Toga. It was 132798.

Was this going on inside her mind? She wasn’t sure. A sense of urgency pervaded the dreamlike atmosphere, a sense that the consequence of losing the fight would be worse than death.

Then she remembered: Pestilentia had said the trigger words, the sleeper code which would bring out her memories of the Left Hand, the memories of her lost twelve years. The code that would make her 132798 again.

She wasn’t about to let that happen. Her body was hers, for fucks sake! That bitch 98 could keep those 12 years, Toga would kick her ass!

They met, knife against knife. 98 seemed to be slightly more skilled, but Toga had almost six years of extra experience. And inside this dream…vision…thing…Toga still had all her fingers! She would win, she would fucking win!

Their knives danced, their offhand catching the forearm to check the other´s attack; a game of musical chairs almost...except the chairs were successfully parrying your evil clone´s dagger, and missing the chair when the music stopped would mean getting shanked.

Toga heard a voice encouraging her, echoing in the distance, so far away… “Fight, Himiko! Win,

you have to win!" That gave 98 just the opening she had needed.

Toga lost the game, 98´s knife cutting her arm at the wrist. But Toga had new tricks 98 had no way of knowing, such as a sweet little shift of right hand to the left when using only one knife. Even as 98 cut through her wrist, severing her tendons, Toga caught the knife with her left hand and jammed it straight into 98´s eye.

An explosion of sensations rocked her nerves.

She felt the phantom pain of her severed fingers.

She felt her brain cells on fire, her synapses lighting up, she felt like she was in a tidal wave of cells crashing against another group of rotten, cancerous cells, overwhelming them, defeating them.

She felt the pain in her eyes from the tension of them rolling upwards into her head. She felt her throat, sore and numb by her screaming. Her muscles cramped by the seizure. The pain from the electricity.

But after the explosion, she could feel herself in control again. She had stopped moving.

Toga opened her eyes.

Before her, Pestilentia clutched his head, bleeding from his ears, nose and eyes. Izu-Izu was beside her, trying to rise with great effort.

"Izu-Izu!" she said, her voice hoarse by her screaming. She tried to move towards him, but all her limbs were cramped and in pain for all that tension.

"I defeated him, Himiko! I beat him!" Izuku managed to say, as he got to one knee.

Inside the forcefield Pestilentia thrashed about, trying to reach his chair, but he knocked it over, sending the seat crashing unto the "sister". The middle-aged woman was hit by the office chair and fell to the ground, wheezing in pain as she fell with a cracking sound. *She broke a bone?*

As the "sister" awoke, the forcefield dissolved to nothing. In Russian, she muttered "Where am I? Why am I here? Can someone call a doctor?" Toga spoke into her earpiece, glad it hadn´t been fried by the electricity, *that Hatsume girl can make tech, I'll give her that*, relying the situation to the rest of the team "Pestilentia has a hostage, we need medical down here fast!"

Izuku struggled up to his feet, moving towards the super villain, who had steadied himself against the table, looking afraid and angered.

"Pestilentia, you are under arrest."

The hero staggered closer and closer, a pair of handcuffs already in his hand. But Izuku hadn't noticed Pestilentia´s hand reaching for a gun hidden beneath the desk, an old Soviet Makarov pistol, pulling it out in a split second, aiming between Izuku´s eyes.

Izuku could probably get out of the way of a bullet in better circumstances. Battered and on the brink of exhaustion, the shot would have made its mark.

But Toga had seen it coming in Pestilentia´s eyes; the second Izuku had stepped towards the desk, Toga had reached for her last throwing knife, releasing it as the villain pulled the gun on Izuku. *A beautiful throw*.

The blade sank completely, going through the red eye and into Pestilentia´s brain. With a spray of blood, he fell down to the ground. The sister was screaming in terror, but Toga could barely hear anything.

Everything seemed…muffled. Sound, pain…even her vision was fading. *How odd…it is all going away…*

Girolamo Nazzaro watched the security camera footage coming from Pestilentia´s offices on his laptop, placed lazily on his hotel bed, a luxurious king size that dominated his suite.

As he saw the knife end his boss, he smiled. Not only was the top hotel in Bogotá treating him well, his criminal life was going much better than expected.

He pulled out his smartphone and started a conference call with every other ranking boss in Pestilentia´s organization. “Gentlemen, the King is dead. I wish to submit his “deadman trigger” plan to a vote. All those in favour of releasing an epidemic harvested from the cells of dead child soldiers and mutated swamp beasts, say “Aye”.”

No one spoke. “All those in favour of splitting this criminal empire among ourselves, staying allied if beneficial, going our own way if not, say “Nay”.” The response was unanimous.

Nay it was, and Nazzaro was quite happy with his little slice of the pie; Italy, France, Spain, a few Greek Islands (which included his favourite town outside of Italy, Santorini), Colombia and a few Central American countries, and the city of Cancun, of course.

Someone knocked at his door. Through the eyehole he could see a man in a bespoke suit, his hair combed elegantly, and his moustache manicured with care. “Garcia, I trust everything is ready?”

“Si, the doctor is waiting for you.” The Mexican bodyguard, a Sicario from the Villarreal Cartel, had been chosen to protect him in the mission to ready the “Pestilence”, and now that the big boss was gone, Nazzaro was his authority.

Exiting the hotel, they climbed into a bulletproof SUV. They expected no danger in Bogotá, but it was better to be cautious. “The doctor should have called us after rush hour, we´ll be on the street for a long time.”

Nazzaro said in annoyance. “It means they found the man and the doctor wants to do this now” replied the bodyguard.

The Cartel had selected him among their Sicarios as the deadliest, Garcia was known to massacre entire towns wearing a skull mask, just because they had fucked with the Cartel.

Apparently, his Quirk had something to do with his instincts, perhaps like a sixth sense for danger, almost, but one wouldn’t know at first, since the Sicario had started calling his Quirk his street name, “Santa Muerte”.

“So where did they find someone as handsome as me, anyways?” The body double as a decoy had been Garcia´s idea, a splendid one, Nazzaro thought.

“The doc didn’t say, Jefe, but I guess at least the hair and build was close enough.”

“Anyway, Garcia, does the Villareal Cartel have people in Cancun? I just won it as my super villain inheritance and would like to hire trustworthy people.”

Garcia took his hand from the steering wheel to scratch his moustache, and then said “It´s Galindo territory. We can take over if you want to work together there.” They spent most of the commute planning the annexation of Cancun, and some plans for legit businesses to launder the money made.

In a state-of-the-art surgeon´s office, on the north side of Bogotá, Nazzaro met the doctor, a man named Hernan López. The doctor had a visual Quirk that made it easier to perform complicated plastic surgery.

“My assistant has already prepared your new papers; would you like to see them? The forgers gave us a choice of a Mexican or French passport.” A nurse brought him two folders to chose from. He picked the French.

“Jean-Baptiste Saintclaire…this name offends my Italian side, but I can always pick a different one later. A year younger too, that is good. Could we perhaps make the chin a slight bit thinner?”

“Sure, “Jean-Baptiste”, sure. Would you like to see Mr. Nazzaro first?”

“I would, doctor.” Nazzaro walked with López to a room with a security door, which the doctor opened with a retinal scanner.

Inside, sleeping on a stretcher, was a man who could have been his twin. Same height, build, hair colour and texture. Surgery scars on his face were already healing.

“He has the same blood type, too. I also burned off his fingerprints, so the police will need another means of identification. While you are under the knife, we will take some blood and set up a transfusion. By nightfall, this man will be Girolamo Nazzaro.”

“Good thing I booked the hotel room, huh?” said Garcia. Then he added “My boys already found him a driver and a car. Good luck on the operation table, boss.”

Nazzaro was dressed in hospital scrubs and led to the operating theatre, laying down on the bed, the nurse put on the anaesthetic mask. “Count backwards from 10, please. 10…9…8…”

Jean-Baptiste Saintclaire awoke with an aching face. It felt stretched out in a strange way, but he would get used to it.

He switched on the TV, and it was already on the news “…This is Canal Capital Noticias, we have a reporter live on the scene where a police pursuit caught a criminal fleeing on a sedan after exchanging gunshots with a team of detectives, Maria what can you tell us?”

The reporter, an attractive young woman with feathers instead of hair, answered “Hello Carlos, we are here on Avenida Jimenez, the police have set up a perimeter around the crashed car. After a brief gunfight the two criminals were taken down by the police, and the scene is secure, I will stay on scene to report back when we know more, Carlos. Nos vemos luego, Maria out.”

The presenter then kept going, starting the sports section without giving it a second thought.

“I guess I am free to rule my little kingdom now, sadly I must do so with a French name for now. Garcia, lets go back to the hotel, I wish to have some arequipe delivered as room service. Oh, and be sure to start an auction for those Pestilence bombs, someone might pay good cash for them.”

Holy Diver rushed through the underground tunnels, a team of Delta Force medics behind her.

The baby upstairs was under Freya´s care and had been starting to calm down as Anna heard the request for medical support underground; Midoriya and Toga were injured, Toga was unconscious, a hostage was in shock and needed the medics.

They passed through a series of knocked out enemy troops, as they journeyed deeper into the tunnels the soldiers and assassins they found defeated looked deadlier and more deranged.

A few had died of their injuries, but for the most part, Midoriya and Toga had done their best to capture them non-lethally. The Delta squad leader called for some reinforcements to further secure the enemy casualties, and they kept moving forward.

In a larger room with a smashed lateral wall revealing a secret anteroom, they found two more downed enemies; a dead infiltrator in a dark sneaking suit and a super soldier cuffed hand and foot in an improvised hogtie.

“Corpsman, check that man for vitals” ordered Anna to one of the medics.

“Faint signals, ma´am, he is still alive. But I don’t know if he´ll make it, there´s massive head trauma and damage to the trachea, and who knows how many broken bones. And looks like a severed brachial artery at the arm, from a knife wound meant to cut through the tendons and disable the lower arm. Guy was probably high on steroids and stimulants to keep fighting through all that. You want us to save him?”

“Please try to, corpsman. The rest, on me.”

Through a central gate and a short tunnel, they reached a chamber that was arrayed into some sort of doctor´s office, the psychologist style recliner gave Anna that opinion at least.

A few meters away from the glass desk at the centre of the room were Toga and Midoriya, the lad crouched over his girlfriend protectively. Close to them sat an older woman, her terrified eyes darting around the room, zip cuffed by Midoriya for her own safety.

Anna approved; hostages were unpredictable, could be enemies in disguise or just affected by Stockholm Syndrome.

“We´re here Midoriya, you can step away from Toga now, let the medics check you both.” The young man nodded, he looked about ready to collapse of exhaustion.

“This is Holy Diver, target is KIA, I repeat; target is KIA. Securing operations playbook now.”

The upper level office had contained half of the operations expected, labelled as “Right Hand”, reports for a “Pestilence”, a global scale attack that his underlings would launch. The Agency was using every last resource now to stop it from happening.

Plugging in a decryption device to the super villain´s computer, Holy Diver examined all the files therein. A detailed file on Toga was still open, very thorough and complete, including a final portion of “assumptions” of her activities with the Agency, with terrifying accuracy.

A folder labelled “Left Hand” showed the assassins recalled to protect Pestilentia in his final hour,

almost three quarters of them.

“Support, I´ve got more data for you, uploading now. Send it up the line, we have to catch these fuckers before they can act. Holy Diver, out.”

As the decryption device uploaded the data, Anna examined the room again. “Corporal, secure that room beyond the door, it is probably Pestilentia´s bedroom. If it is a security room, get all the footage you can, we can use it for PR.”

“Yes, ma´am.”

Anna took out her phone and photographed the scene; Midoriya still ready to protect Toga with the medics around them, the wrecked furniture and Pestilentia´s corpse, Toga´s last throwing knife stuck up to the hilt.

Upon further examination she also found his ears bleeding and signs of cerebral trauma, she would need to ask Midoriya about it later, as the boy had finally passed out.

On her radio she heard the support team relaying information “Two of the Left Hand agents have been caught, one was embedded in the President´s Secret Service, the other one was a mid-level operative in the FBI. MI6 has caught one of the bosses in Cardiff, a Pestilence bomb is secured.”

Mission accomplished. It was now beyond her hands; all their allies, even friendly rivals like Russia and China, now had the information, and the witch hunt for Pestilentia´s organization could begin.

Undoubtedly some criminals would escape, regroup and keep being pieces of shit, but they had a golden opportunity to sweep in and destroy the organization and reduce the power vacuum left.

Anna was fucking ecstatic, the only way her day could be better was with some Chicago pizza, an ice-cold bottle of red Gatorade, and some alone time with Freya.

“All callsigns, this is Holy Diver, Command Actual. All objectives completed, lets go home, boys.”

Chapter End Notes

> The relief of this long fight ending can only be captured by a song like "An end once and for all" from Mass Effect 3.
>
> It´s been a journey getting to this outcome, scrapping several ideas, rewriting some chapters, trying to write Pestilentia so he wasn´t just a creepypasta antagonist, trying to make the romance with Izuku and Toga flow as naturally as possible. I started writing this fic sometime in October, sharing it bit by bit with my friend Sam, my unofficial "beta reader". With her encouragement I started uploading this here, and I have enjoyed enormously every comment, kudos and really just having more readers to this story. I hope you have liked it, and soon I will start uploading a sequel, this world I wrote still has a lot of danger around. Hell, I´m even starting to have ideas for a third story sometime in the future. Thanks for sharing this journey with me!

A special report

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Katsuki Bakugou would NOT admit that he was worried about Izuku Midoriya´s wellbeing, but after lying on press about his stupid wanted criminal girlfriend that damn nerd had disappeared again.

Was that operation with the Americans happening right now? Bakugou felt a bit nervous for his friend...ly rival; if his inference was right, he had allied with the Americans to fight one of the top ten villains in the world.

He had already deduced that Ashido was on a similar project against the number one villain, Ndege Mweusi, that piece of shit African dictator that seriously pissed Bakugou off, and Ashido wasn't working with Deku, so it had to be one of the other nine.

An assortment of terrorists and shitheads, the distance between the number 2 villain, Pestilentia, and the third villain, a warlord in the Middle East, was quite substantial. So Deku was after one of these other guys? Which one?

Damn nerd, why are you getting into all that trouble? Wasn't All for One enough? If it is because of that Toga bitch I´ll kick your ass next time I see you.

"Hey, Katsuki, there´s a special hero report on the news scheduled in a few minutes, wanna see it?" Eijirou said, barging into Katsuki´s room.

"What the hell would it be about, anyway? Endeavor jailing some rando again?"

"I don't know, they were pretty secretive about it."

"What the hell, let's see it."

The hero couple moved over to the living room, and they switched on the tv, changing the channel from the food network Katsuki had last seen to the Hero Network, where national and international Hero exploits were reported.

The presenter, that brunette reporter that made Mineta breathe heavily, started speaking after the initial jingle "Hello, and welcome to a special report here on the Hero Network! Today we are joined by the hero Deku and the special agent codenamed Holy Diver, from the American Quirk Intelligence and Intervention Agency, with good news: the number two most wanted criminal in the world, Pestilentia is no more! We have a short video of the fights after a brief explanation of what happened! Miss Holy Diver, Deku, if you would?"

The agent, a woman wearing armoured combat fatigues and a full-face helmet spoke first "We started operations against Pestilentia, who now we now was a retired Russian Intelligence operative named Dmitri "Dima" Krasnov, about two years ago, around the time All for One resurfaced.

"With all that we learned we now know that Krasnov came from a family with deep ties to the KGB, who turned a blind eye to the Krasnov operations around the world. Pestilentia´s own mother, Kseniya Ivanovna Krasnov was the KGB´s last Director before the Russians shut it down and purged their intelligence agencies some seventy years ago.

"The KGB covered up relating to the Krasnovs in the end, so we only made a breakthrough a few months ago, when our Agency made contact with Deku and made a deal with former villain Himiko Toga."

“WHAT THE FUCK?!?!” yelled Bakugou.

“You already knew Midoriya was lying about that girl, Katsuki, calm down!” asked Kirishima.

“Tsk” huffed Katsuki, paying attention again.

That damn nerd started talking next “In the year between All for One´s defeat and today, I managed to convince Toga to surrender to the authorities and make a deal, so the Agency took her in and she helped us against Pestilentia. We fought his people in London, where our identities were still classified.”

While the show played a clip of the “SAS Agents saving the Prime Minister”, Bakugou checked his cell phone, that was vibrating.

“Did Mineta text you too saying that “Midoriya convinced that villain with ridiculous amounts of sex”?”

“That little fucker is so damn predictable! That Setsuna needs to put some more sense in his mind!”

On screen, Deku continued “After London, we hurried to capture Pestilentia in Saint Petersburg, based on information we extracted from one of his men.”

“By asking nicely, of course” added that Holy Diver woman, with an icy tone that chilled Katsuki ´s spine.

“On the way, we were intercepted by men from the Mountain Brigade allied with Pestilentia. After the encounter, bolstered by the rest of my team and the best heroes from the Nordic Confederation, we attacked a secret base on Denmark, where we found out a great deal on Pestilentia´s villainy, and the fact that he had his men kidnap Toga as a young girl to make her into an assassin, based on her Quirk, Transform, which allows her to take the form of the person whose blood she ingests.”

“That´s really f´ed up, man!” said Kirishima.

The Holy Diver woman continued “Our Denmark battle was successful, and we decided to invite the rest of Team First Response to join on our assault on Pestilentia´s last stronghold. The team would attack a position in the sea between Japan and Russia, which I believe your Hero Network already covered a few days ago.

"Meanwhile, the rest of us would attack the stronghold, a town called Krasnograd, and this school, the Tselinoyarsk Institute, where Pestilentia trained assassins and soldiers, some from birth, as his tools of war and domination."

A short drone camera video showed the school and the town it overlooked as it was swarmed by Russian and American forces. The drone footage was sped up, condensing about an hour of mission time into three or four minutes. Jets dogfighting, artillery firing, tanks…Katsuki´s pyromaniac side loved watching that.

“Now that is power!” he said as he saw a tank exploding. Near the end of the video, that dangerous plane that mechanic girl, who Deku wasn’t dating for some reason Katsuki could not understand (they were two goddamn nerds!), had crafted, hovered on top of the school.

The drone zoomed in on the heroes entering; that Freya mentioned looking badass as fuck, Deku carrying his criminal girlfriend like they were in their honeymoon, the agent Holy Diver fast roping.

“Inside we faced strong resistance, so we split up; Deku and Toga secured the basement, and Freya and I took down the section above ground.”

Next, they showed a “PG rated” montage of the teams clearing the building, made from security cam footage, body cams on their hero suits; even footage from the helmet cam of one of the villains.

The montage obviously did not show anyone dying on screen or the gunshots hitting anyone; that restricted version would undoubtedly be added for some editions of this report further on, or on “dark and edgy” documentaries.

Bakugou was on the edge of the seat when they showed a fight between Deku and a super soldier, the cuts in the edition obviously to censure the most grievous wounds.

“That guy looked strong, Midoriya really has improved since first year, huh?”

“Damn nerd kicked his ass! Stupid guy was probably genetically modified and shit and Deku beat him! Damn right.”

A few shots of a duel between Toga and another girl who fought exactly the same way were also added, but not too many, probably because they would traumatise young viewers who just wanted to see badass heroes punch stuff.

“Now for the footage of Deku confronting Pestilentia we used a few cameras around the room and combined it for a 3D image.” Holy Diver said, sounding slightly excited at that.

The video was played in a vignette between the reporter and the heroes, showing Deku walking towards Pestilentia, a guy with red eyes that had danger and death in them.

“I will take you down, villain!” said Deku, as he stepped from a downed Toga on the ground, having some sort of seizure.

The villain injected himself with a syringe that Kirishima instantly recognized “That´s Trigger!” Deku said the same in voiceover

“Pestilentia´s Quirk allowed him to invade the unconscious minds of people infected with cells he produced, the cells affected the brain and allowed him total control of nightmares. Using Trigger, he attacked my mind, as I had been injected the cells in his base in Denmark. But on Trigger a Quirk is both stronger and unsafe, and he could not control the dream…” the footage showed Deku falling to one knee and blood squirting out from Pestilentia´s eyes, ears and nose.

“The next part is a bit graphic, Pestilentia grabbed a gun and tried to shoot me point blank but Toga saved me with a thrown knife. That was the end of the villain, and with the information on his computers, we are working tirelessly to end his criminal empire!”

Deku still had that hopeful gleam in his eyes; apparently a guy getting inside his dreams, finding out his villain girlfriend was a kidnapped child soldier and being drafted into a goddamn war did no more than the League of Villains and All for One had managed.

Fucking Deku.

“And here´s a video we took when we blew up that horrible place.” Holy Diver added, pointing to the vignette.

Deku, Toga, Freya and Holy Diver posed in the middle of a huge group of soldiers, Russian and American, some wearing pilot and tanker gear, most infantry soldiers.

First the large group picture was taken, then one where everyone did a “wacky” pose, the Russians squatting and holding signs saying “Cheeki breeki iv damke”, the Americans in a huge variety of poses, Deku laughing as he tried to pose in a badass way and Toga kissed his cheek, Holy Diver holding up Freya's gauntleted hand in a “I declare you the boxing winner” way.

And then two fighter planes flew above them, dropping bombs, and a huge explosion formed behind them, and the video froze there.

“Kiri, I can´t even get angry. Deku took down the number two villain without even giving us a heads up, he is a shithead, and I should want to kick his ass, but that explosion, babe. Those were old-school MOAB´s Kiri, I´m going to cry, that explosion was perfect!”

He hadn't noticed but he was standing up, gesticulating with both hands. “Tsk, let´s just watch the rest.” He sat down again.

“Well Deku, miss agent, that is a most unexpected story, we are grateful you have defeated such a menace to society. We have a few questions prepared, if you would be so good as to give us an answer?”

“Sure.”

“Of course!”

The presenter took out some notes, cleared her breath and began “This gives us the revelation that Himiko Toga was indeed involved in all of this, and actually helped the forces of justice against a supervillain…is the agreement made by the ex-villain Toga available for the public? Can you tell us what it entails?”

Holy Diver shifted slightly, and then answered “Toga is an asset under the Quirk Intelligence and Intervention Agency, her status as an inmate of the Department of Justice is not something we can really discuss openly. But I assure you, under the terms brokered, Toga will not abandon US territory unless supervised by our Agency. And she still has a great debt with society, which she will alleviate with service in the name of freedom and justice.”

“Great!” said the reporter “There have been heroes who fall to darkness and become villains, but never the other way around. Could this be a first? Next Question…there´s gotta be hundreds of social questions about you and Toga, Deku, so we´ll let them ask you for more details…you two are together?”

Deku looked like he wanted to be anywhere else rather than to answer an uncomfortable question, but in a few instants, he steeled himself and, with determined eyes, answered “Yes, we are. I had to lie before because it would have affected the mission.”

“Kiri, I´m getting bored with this, lets cook something or play a game.”

“Yeah, looks like its ending soon anyway.”

Chapter End Notes

I wish I could have added more of Bakugou in this fic, he´s great. Thank you for reading!

Epilogue: Toga's Family

Chapter Notes

> For the mood in this chapter there´s nothing more fitting than "Ezio´s Family" from the Assassin´s Creed II soundtrack, the notes are at the same time sad, nostalgic, hopeful and even triumphant by the end.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“So, what happens now?” asked Toga when Izuku and General Bitchface joined her on the car.

They had chosen to just have Izuku, as a Japanese hero, and Holy Diver, as a special agent, as the mission representatives on the report, it was easier to tell the watered-down version of events that way.

“We are going to Hades Prison with Shouto and Momo, they are visiting Touya…Dabi…I thought you'd like to see him too. Shigaraki is also there, I wanted to check in on him, I think Fridays he meets with Nejire Hadou, I hope we don’t intrude too much…” said Izuku, looking like he didn’t want to be a third wheel.

“I can go see them? YES! I've missed my big brothers!”

General Bitchface then added “Tomorrow we'll take you with Vlad King and your eh…brother. You probably have a lot to talk with them too.” Her voice was full of…concern?

“What about you, Holy Diver, you're coming with us?”

She smirked a half-smile before answering “Date night with Freya, so no. Anyway kid, where's the rest of your gang?”

With a smile, Izuku said “Tsuyu and Tokoyami are taking a few weeks off, Mei is with her parents, Ochako is with Tenya; Tensei's surgery is next week.”

“The offer still stands for all your team, kid. We need people like you for what Texas Red has in mind. A global Agency, the best heroes in the planet, ready to fight big threats…”

“I'm sorry Miss Holy Diver, I think we are all a bit tired of fighting for some time. I actually wanted to ask if Himiko and I could just spend some time together away from all before she… before she has to return.”

His face was heartbroken, he had realized that Toga's sentence was about to begin in earnest. Toga herself still had no idea what would happen now that she had fulfilled her part of the bargain…

“There's no real hurry for her to fight for us at the moment, though we would like to formalize recruitment, paperwork mostly, coming up with a callsign, Hero Name, whatever you want to call it…You can go anywhere in US territory, kids, I suggest Hawaii, it's closer. And that includes embassies, so you can technically be on house arrest there too if no Agency personnel can oversee you for Japan. So, have your little vacation and we'll have your time sorted out when you return, right?”

“Wha…Thanks!” *House arrest in all the US territory is pretty damn good!*

“Don’t thank me yet, you still have to fill enough paperwork to scare ME. And you've gotta come up with that Hero Name, got it?”

“Yeah, I have tons of ideas!”

“Oh, and another thing, the medical analysis on that baby came out…she's Quirkless. Pestilentia was fucking BLUFFING. And thankfully her family is still alive, they had moved quickly to search in Hong Kong and Pestilentia's people had just tracked them down hours before we caught them. They are quite affected, but they will live, we will help them economically as well.”

They drove about an hour and a half more, away from Tokyo and into the countryside. They turned left on an isolated road that led them to a cluster of military installations with a state-of-the-art prison in the centre.

In the parking lot they saw a few employee cars, a van or two for transporting the guards, and two other guest vehicles; a dark blue SUV with a couple of stickers saying, “teacher on board!” and “my other ride is my pair of wings”, and a really cute neon turquoise scooter.

A guard met them at the entrance, where Holy Diver left them, saying “Later kids, hitch a ride back with the Todorokis.”

The guard informed them that the Todoroki siblings and their mother were already on their visit, but they could see Shigaraki now.

“Yes, let's go see the Handy Man!” had said Toga with excitement.

Compared to the refurbished Tartarus, this prison was much less a dungeon, a lot more effort was placed into the rehabilitation of prisoners in Hades. It was by no means insecure or easy to escape, but the all-around atmosphere was much more positive. Then again Toga had only visited Tartarus while trying to bust out a prisoner, so she might be biased.

The guard led them underground several levels, and further down a few corridors, where they reached a room that had a very distinct separation between itself and the one next to it.

“Mei helped the architects of this prison design that wall; it is a wall panel inside, then a fluid fills the next half meter between the panel and the next room, the fluid is measured accurately by its volume and if it shifts by Shigaraki's Quirk dissolving it, it turns liquid to surround his hand and then flash freezes…Thankfully he has been good and the gloves have been enough.”

The door was a sort of airlock where more of the fluid could be poured in seconds to prevent escape. The guard knocked on the door “Surprise visit, Mr. Shigaraki!”

Almost instantly on the inner door they could see blue hair and some extremely curious eyes looking at them, rushing to their faces when the guard opened the doors.

“Oh it's you Deku! How good to see you, did you cut your hair? Never mind the hair is that scar new?”

“Hey Nejire! Good to see you too, yes, and yes! This is my girlfriend Himiko!”

“Oh she's so cute! I love your hair! Tenko has told me about you, that you are like his little sister.

Is it okay if I give you a really cute nickname, Deku only said your first name and that is really intimate, and I am a bit too late to ask your last name now…how about Toothsy?"

"Uhh…thanks? Yeah, Toothsy is nice and cute!"

"Anyway, we are sitting in the living room talking about cosmic horror, bathtubs and our favourite flavours of sodas!"

Toga grinned a huge smile, she was liking this Nejire girl "Well I've got an anecdote or two about this really amazing root beer in Texas…"

Soon they were talking in a lively, carefree manner, this blue girl had a way of making the mood in a room really light. With how naturally she could make people feel at ease, Toga thought it was a no brainer that Nejire was such a great hero.

Shigaraki was a bit quiet, not really from his personality it seemed, rather by how flustered he was around Nejire. Toga's nose told her that the feelings seemed to be mutual, she could smell crushes a mile away!

For over an hour they caught up and talked about random things. After discussing pirate ships at great detail for a few minutes, Shigaraki asked Izuku to the side, he wanted some advice on something. Toga could barely overhear him saying "…I want to ask her…"

"So, you've been on a much longer journey than that special report on the tv said, haven't you, Toothsy?"

"Yeah, we kinda earned a small vacation, Izu-Izu and I."

"Oh that is such a great nickname! Anyway I…"

"Eh…Toga, could I talk with you for a sec?" asked Shigaraki.

They walked to the other side of the cell, a seriously nice room, in Toga's opinion. "So, what's up, bro?"

He narrowed his eyes slightly before saying "Two things…nah, three. One, you and Izuku. He's my friend now that he's been visiting so I've gotta ask…you are serious about him? You may be like my little sister, but I do not want to see Izuku sad."

"Very serious. Marriage levels of serious, Handy Man. Though I kinda think it looks better when you aren't automatically facepalming all the time…"

"Toga. Come on. Next question; in the interview they said that asshole Pestilentia got inside people's dreams…was he in mine?"

"He was, he told us in the end. Sick bastard, I've never slept better now that he's gone. I put a blade in his brain!"

"Well, that is very much the old you. Thank you, Toga."

When he started to ask his third question, he became nervous and fidgety. "Last question…do you think Nejire likes me? I'm going to ask her if she wants to be my girlfriend…I get a few hours in town every month and we had a couple of dates…"

"Tell her. If she visits this much, she obviously cares, and she smells like she likes you! So, do it!

One thing though, do I call you Tenko Shimura now?"

With a shrug he answered "Sure."

Turning around to her boyfriend, Toga yelled "Izu-Izu, we should wait outside!"

Izuku caught her drift quickly, and she led him by the hand outside. "What a rare pair, I would never have imagined it…" she said as they left.

"We'll come by next week before we go on vacation!" she said as they left. "Now lets go and see Dabi!"

The guard again led them to a different cell, again with some Hatsume Industries™ customization; in seconds it could be flooded with fire suppressants and stop even the hottest fire. As they approached, the Todorokis and Momo were leaving.

"Izuku! You're here!" said Shouto as he saw them, bringing Izuku in for a hug. Momo was a bit more restrained, but still very happy to see him, and she gave Toga a very polite greeting.

With them were the two other siblings, a brother and the pretty sister that was dating Hawks. Last to leave the cell was a dignified woman with white hair, she looked like a queen who had been through too much.

"Young Midoriya, it is always so good to see you, we'll wait outside to give you two a ride back, alright? My son will be very happy to get some more visitors."

For some reason Toga felt really protective of the sad, dignified lady, she wanted to punch whoever had hurt her, in the face. Maybe it was the maternal way she gave Toga a hug…every "mom hug" she recieved made her realize how much she had needed a mother figure in her life.

The guard let them in and instantly she was yelling "Dabi!" and running over to hug him.

"Hey little sister!" he said, patting her head just like old times.

Turning to Izuku, he gave him an icy "Midoriya." Izuku just nodded and took a seat. Again, it took a while for Toga to catch up with her big brother, and she had really missed him. He looked a bit different, the natural red of his hair overtaking the old black colour, his smile easy, relaxed.

He looked healthy and happy, and Toga could not have asked for more for her bro.

"Midoriya, treat her right, please. I'm not threatening anyone again, but I'd be very disappointed in you if you hurt her, alright?"

"I won't hurt Himiko, Touya, I love her."

"That's good enough for me. My family's probably waiting for you, aren't they? Don't keep them long, we'll see each other again. Take care, Toga."

Toga cried as she hugged him. "Hey, hey, don't cry. I'll be here when you come back, probably for the next ten or fifteen years."

He gave a sad smile "It is nice in here, don't worry about me or Shigaraki. We'll be fine, Toga. Enjoy your freedom, you fought for it and even left a piece of you for it."

Toga was quiet on the ride back, still thinking about her friends. When he noticed Toga lost in thought, Izuku reached out for her hand, meeting her eyes, letting her know he was there with no need for words.

The sister, who Toga learned was named Fuyumi, dropped them off at the warehouse Izuku and his friends used as the base for their small hero agency.

It was still a few hours till bedtime, so Izuku and Toga started planning their week-and-a-half long vacation to Hawaii. “You're sure you can survive seeing me in a bikini all week, Izu-Izu?” she purred into his ear, caressing his arm lightly.

The blushing hero replied with a somewhat confident smile “Himiko, I've already seen you naked!”

“Touché…wanna see me naked again?” she replied with her fanged smile.

“Hell yes, I want to, but right now I'm starving…wanna go buy some food? There's a street vendor close by that makes soba that Shouto swears by…”

“Of course! Proper nutrition is always recommended for vigorous physical actions!” she said, blushing and doing lewd gestures with her fingers.

“Hey Shouto, we're going for some soba, you want some?”

In a second Todoroki was there saying “Soba?”

“I'll ask them for your order when we return, alright?”

“Thank you, brother. Pay it back later?”

“Of course. See you in a while!”

A few minutes later they were standing at the street vendor, enjoying the savoury noodles.

“Oh fuck, they are great!” said Toga, slurping on the noodles.

Izuku looked like he was about to say something, but instead he just smiled and kissed her cheek “Your deliberate lack of table manners is kind of endearing, Himiko” he said, his smile turning sarcastic.

They ordered Todoroki's order and bought a rather big lunch for Momo as well, and they walked back to the warehouse.

With no supervillains out there ready to force their way into her dreams, a knife concealed in her jeans and Izu-Izu by her side, Toga felt invincible. In the warehouse, the other couple thanked them profusely before going back to cuddling on the couch.

“So…does your bed fit us both or are we going to snuggle really tight?” she asked, her face already pink with lewd blushing.

“What's the point of having super strength if I can't grab a second bed and bring it to my room?” with a wink he added “With one bed we'll probably just fall over, I'll be right over.”

As she waited, Toga had two thoughts in mind; buying some lingerie whenever she had an Agency salary, *I can't properly seduce Izu-Izu in sports bras and common underwear after all,* and to ask Izuku if the walls were soundproof.

The next day Toga woke up feeling completely satisfied in every meaning of the word, though perhaps a bit sore. Izuku was already up somewhere in the team's hideout, probably making breakfast or training.

Did he let me sleep late? The times she had been able to sleep late in the past year didn't count to double digits, and in none of them had she woken up this well rested.

She fished her clothes from the floor where she had thrown them the previous night, tried in vain for a few minutes to arrange the chaos they had made of the bedsheets, then went to the bathroom for a drink of water.

Dressed with last day's jeans, clean underwear and a simple green (*Deku green)* t-shirt, and the boots of her sneaking suit (they were really comfortable), she left the room, joining whatever members of Team First Response were in the kitchen.

In the team's dining area sat Todoroki and Izuku, eating from a plate of fresh cooked pancakes, in the kitchen Momo and Hatsume were drinking some smoothies and chatting something in complex scientific terms Toga couldn't quite understand.

"Morning guys!" she beamed at them, they seemed to have started to warm up a bit to her after Izuku had told them about her saving his life. Either that or her natural charm was winning them over, anyway.

"Good day, Toga!" said Momo, giving her a polite smile.

Hatsume came up to her, offering a hand. Toga shook it. "Anyone that saves Izuku's life is a friend in my book so, wanna be friends?"

"I'd love to!" she replied.

Instantly, Hatsume´s face turned into a saleswoman's cunning expression "In that case maybe you can hire me to improve that catsuit you use, that white one…with some cameras and a few patents on the internet we could make it into passive camouflage! You'd be pretty much invisible! I can alter it for your Quirk and everything!"

Toga was kind of stunned at the offer, so she only nodded. She relied more on social stealth than actual sneaking, but passive camouflage could be a good asset…

After breakfast, Inko Midoriya picked them up in a nice car with a sticker on the trunk that said, "In love with a hero!".

"Izuku! Toga! I hope you are both okay with me tagging along? Toshinori had some work to do so he couldn't make it, but he sends you both a hug!"

"It´s alright, mom, I understand." All Might had met them when they returned from the mission, hugging them both and telling them he was really proud of them. He had talked long with Izuku, while Inko Midoriya had listened to Toga.

In that moment Toga had really opened up to the older Midoriya, telling her all she had felt fighting her former rival, fighting herself for control over her personality, killing Pestilentia. Toga knew she would need an actual psychiatrist further on, but for the moment venting a bit with Inko had helped

her enormously.

Back in the present, Inko drove them to a medium sized house in the suburbs around UA, a logical place for a teacher like Vlad King to live.

Izuku rang on the doorbell and soon they could hear barking behind the door. “Just a second, I'll be right up Biggles!”

The door opened to reveal Sekijiro Kan, the hero Vlad King.

Her uncle.

“Hello, all of you, please come inside! Don’t mind Sir Bigglesworth the Third over here, he's a sweetheart.” Vlad King said as he patted the aforementioned dog, an aging English bulldog who looked at them with curiosity.

Izuku scratched the doggo behind his stubby ears, giggling as the dog barked in answer. Toga was a bit more cautious, but also gave him a few soft pats on the head.

“Koichi, our guests are here! Help me set the kettle for some tea!” called the hero teacher “Please join us in the living room, we are very excited to talk.” Toga was excited as well, though a sense of apprehension was there too. *What if they hate me?*

“It is very good to see you again, Midoriyas, I hope all is well?”

“Yes, all is great, Mr. Kan” answered Inko.

Sekijiro continued “Please give my regards to All Might later. Izuku, congratulations on your victory, you make everyone at UA proud with that success!” He was almost posing in an endearingly proud way!

“It was a team effort, sir. I would never have made it half way without Himiko.”

Turning to Toga, Vlad King asked, “So you decided to keep that name?”

“Yes, I will claim it as my own as I pay back my debt to society.”

With a sigh, the older hero said “I thought you might. Would it be alright if we called you Ako, just Koichi and me? Just to…just to keep Isana's memory alive” His eyes were filled with sadness.

“That would be alright, yeah!” she answered, and the hero's eyes lit up again.

Then Koichi Kojima entered the living room with a teapot and some cups. Toga was amazed; it was like looking in a mirror, but also extremely different.

His eyes were the same golden colour, his hair was a similar shade of blonde, a bit paler. Underneath his eyes were dark circles; her brother clearly suffered with insomnia. He was a bit scrawny, and a couple inches taller than her, shorter than Izuku.

Koichi served the tea methodically and sat down. “So…you are Ako? You are my sister? You… you live?”

“I…I am. It is a very long story, and it isn’t pretty.”

Vlad King answered as another dog jumped into his lap, a ridiculously cute Alaskan kleekai, “We have time. Oh, and this is Matilda”

The dog woofed in response, and Toga told her tale. After beating 98 inside her mind she had somehow unblocked some of her memories inside Tselinoyarsk, so she could fill in the gaps of what Pestilentia had told Izuku.

As she spoke, Koichi became more and more distressed, his hands shaking at first, then he started looking pale and he finally excused himself before fleeing to his room.

“He blames himself, Ako. His first memory is traumatic loss and survivors' guilt…therapy and medicine have helped enormously, his friends even more. He needs time to deal with it; last week he mourned the sister that, in his mind, he could not save. Today you are alive and have a life that he can barely comprehend…” The older hero seemed really tired “But please do tell me the rest of the story, I´m really curious about how it turned around in the end.”

By the end of her tale, a third dog had joined them, a German Shepherd called Ritter, who instantly took a liking to Izuku and offered his belly for rubs.

“I don’t really know what to say…I think I'll need some time to process it too; a few months ago I would have arrested you, after all.”

Izuku and Toga decided to check on Koichi before leaving, going up the stairs to his room.

Toga knocked on the door “Hey brother? Can we come in? It's Izu-Izu and me” a weak “Ok” was the only reply.

Koichi was sitting on his bed looking out his window, the TV on but unwatched, an engineering program about some bridge in China.

Without looking at them, Koichi started, his voice barely above a whisper “I'm sorry, Ako. I couldn’t stay and hear it all…what they did was horrible. I…I feel it is my fault. If I had a stronger Quirk, if I had called the police…If I had done something, they wouldn’t have taken you, they wouldn’t have killed mom and dad.” Toga could see he was crying, the tears going down his neck.

She moved in to comfort her brother, but Izuku was faster, placing a hand on his shoulder “Koichi, you can not blame yourself for any of that. You were four years old! What happened that night was NOT your fault, okay? I know how it feels to be powerless…I was born Quirkless. I know how it feels to have regret paralyze you and how it feels when despair is a bit too much. Himiko knows it too. You can trust us, we both care for you, okay? You can talk to us about anything, we'll be happy to hear what you want to say.”

For a long moment Koichi didn’t reply, and Izuku started moving away, but then Koichi said “Deku…Midoriya, thank you. I didn’t think a famous hero would ever say that to me, even less one as badass…You two really put my world upside down, you know?” He gave them a small smile.

Then the TV emitted a high-pitched noise and the image shifted, replaced by a man in black armour, his helmet beaked, a long crimson cloak flowing behind him with black feathers clasping it in place.

The man looked to be about All Might's size (when he was still in his prime), and danger pretty much radiated from him. The armour seemed both strong and flexible, made of some sort of… metal? Polymer? Hatsume was sure to know what the mysterious material was.

Flags flanked the man, it looked like some sort of government announcement, but clearly not the Japanese government. Where had Toga seen those flags?

She had no time to remember as the man spoke in English, with a marked African accent “I am Ndege Mweusi, the Blackbird, Lord of War, God-King of the Mbele Valley, Emperor of Africa by birthright and conquest. My Kingdom has cast aside the demons, the devils, these “Quirked”. If you are still human, join us. Return to the cradle, from Africa mankind will rise again! We will exterminate the Quirks and reclaim our world!”

“Did he just declare war on all the world, Izu-Izu?”

“He did, the real war has begun.”

Chapter End Notes

To write this fic I was inspired by diverse media like Captain America: The Winter Soldier (the original outline had the final confrontation be between Toga and Izuku with all that “I know you are inside there” drama, and while looking for a title “Toga was a Winter Soldier” was one of the top choices), the Metal Gear Solid franchise (the bi-pedal tank is pretty much a Metal Gear Rex, the sneaking suit Toga wears is pretty much the one the Boss uses in the final battle of Snake Eater, etc.) and a quite a few others.
With this story at its end, I wish to thank you all again, I hope you enjoyed reading! Soon I'll start posting the next story, I haven't written much so far, so it may be a month or two before it is up, but hopefully I'll see you there!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!